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# CORANNA,

A NOVEL.



ELLA HARDING-DAVIS.





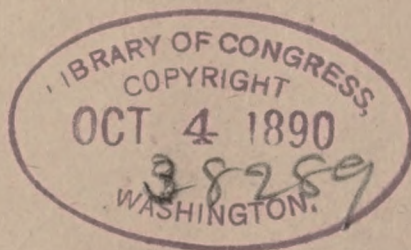




# CORANNA;

A NOVEL.

BY  
ELLA HARDING-DAVIS.



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# CORANNA.

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**H**ENRI LEGUAY, of the firm of Coranna & Leguay, was reclining on a sofa in his office down town, snatching a rest between the hours of business, which were ended, and those of pleasure, which had not as yet begun. Failing in his profession in a country town, Leguay had come to Magnorum and been taken into partnership by the already prosperous lawyer Coranna. Nobody was able to tell just how this had come about. Coranna had all the money, and was supposed to have the greater share of brains; but, however it was, Leguay had proved an excellent partner and the two young men were fast friends. Leguay had taken well in society, too. He was not popular in the same sense as Charlie Coranna, who was hailed with delight wherever he chose to show his face, but he held his own and if he was not so welcome he was always invited. He assumed a critical attitude and his opinions were quoted. He found himself possessed of power to please, to wound, to make, or to mar — and he used it. He was sarcastic and his



sarcasm was feared. Charlie aimed only to please. Both men were on the high road to success. Coranna's father, leaving Italy because of a family feud, had settled in Magnorum a half century since. He had brought a fortune with him, succeeded in increasing it, and at his death bequeathed it to his widow, not doubting but that it would finally find its way into the hands of his son. The latter set about acquiring an income for himself by means of the law and in this he was successful. Coranna was unaffectedly fond of society and very gay. His mother assisted him in maintaining his position, and was also kind to Leguay, but she did not seem to fancy the latter's sister, and it was of this that Henri was thinking, when a quick step on the stairs roused him from his reverie. Presently his partner entered.

"Hallo, Charlie, have you come to make me a visit? Don't you see enough of me in the daytime? Whew, how we are dressed up! Don't come too close, I might faint?"

"Quit your chaff, now, and come along. I expected to find you ready. Aren't you going?"

"Going where?"

"To Mrs. Melton's ball. Don't you remember she invited us to come early and see a little of her friend Miss Van Strat before the rest came."

"Oh, yes, to be sure, I had forgotten all about it. Who is this Miss Van Strat?"

"She's Clara's friend."

"I know that, but is she worth going to see?"



She might be old, or ugly, or skinny or freckled — she might be oh—anything and then think how a fellow would feel, going so early and having to stay so long.”

“I’m going to risk it.”

“Oh you can afford to be independent, your boots fit. Mine are — ”

“Tight?”

“Awful. Have you seen the girl?”

“I saw her for a short time to-day,” returned Coranna, the color deepening in his cheeks.

“How does she look? Tell me about her,” eagerly.

“Come and see for yourself. I’m off. I’ll send the carriage back for you.”

“Tell Clara I will be along directly then,” Leguay called after him as he passed out.

Upon his partner’s departure Leguay went into his room adjoining the office and proceeded to dress leisurely and with the utmost care.

“I wonder if that girl amounts to anything,” was the burden of his thought. “Queer, but that’s the first time I ever saw Coranna’s face change color at mention of a woman. Likes them all as a rule, but one no better than the other. Charlie’s hard to suit, but I think Estelle will suit him. He’ll have to be suited. Let him dare to slight her,” and his brow darkened at the bare suggestion.

It was very late indeed when Leguay greeted Mrs. Melton. “Another time I shall send you an



invitation for the next day, truly I shall, Henri. Charlie told me to expect you, but I had quite given you up."

"Now, Clara, don't be cross. You must admit that if I don't come earlier than any one else, I usually stay later."

"They are all in the ball-room. Come, and I will introduce you to my friend."

"Can't we stay here for awhile and have a little chat?" he pleaded.

Leguay had a way of apparently preferring Mrs. Melton's society to that of any other lady, no matter how charming she might be reputed. He knew how subtly flattering it was.

"Good gracious, Henri, here I have half Magnorum on my hands and you expect me to spend the evening in a tete-a-tete with you; how unreasonable!" and she led the way to the ball-room without more ado.

They paused for a moment to survey the scene. A mirror stretched one way across the room made the space appear illimitable. The sides resembled the outskirts of a forest and the floor almost black and highly polished reflected the twinkling lights and formed a perfect background for the dainty toilets of the dancers.

"You are getting to be Wagnerian in your tastes, Clara. This reminds one of the Black Forest."

"And Lutie completes the picture, does she not? There she is, dancing with Charlie Coranna."



Leguay glanced carelessly in the direction indicated and then caught his breath with a perceptible start. Coranna was waltzing toward him, and on his arm rested a young girl, very young, almost a child she seemed to Henri. Now her face was toward him. What a dazzling complexion! and that soft flush of health and happiness, how exquisite it was! Her hair, falling on her forehead in a golden fringe, was braided à la Marguerite and came below her waist; Henri longed to loosen it. She wore a peasant costume, such as peasants never wear, of blue velvet, laced in front over a mass of illusion, caught at the neck with a jewel and just revealing the merest glimpse of a dainty bosom. She and Coranna were dancing as only people can dance who love the pastime and have found the right partner. Mrs. Melton was called from his side for a time, and he stood watching the dancers. In that brief interval he saw that Charlie was falling in love. The waltz ending, Coranna seated his partner and presently a little group formed about them. Lutie was chattering merrily. Leguay could not hear what she was saying, but he knew it must be amusing from the little trills of laughter that greeted him at intervals. When Mrs. Melton returned they advanced into the room. The guests parted and presently she was in their midst.

“Lutie, this is my friend Mr. Leguay — Miss Van Straat.”

She bowed and Henri joined the group and made



some commonplace remarks. He remained at her side for a few moments, but found himself "out" in the conversation, so he did not linger. He was not in a mood for dancing and withdrew to his former post of observation.

"Charlie is everybody to-night, but pshaw, what woman was ever won in a crowd. I'll make it a point to see her alone once in awhile. I am sorry for Charlie, and I suppose it will play the deuce with the partnership; but it can't be helped. There ought to have been two women, but as it is there is only one and she is that one. Look to your laurels, my dear Charlie," departing with a sneer. "When there is a woman in the case I always have won and, please the devil, I always will."

Coranna was among the last to depart. Lutie was conscious of a queer little thrill when he bade her good-bye. Not that he had said any thing unusual, but his soul was in his eyes.

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The morning after Mrs. Melton's ball Leguay was late in getting down to the office, something that did not happen once a year. He was in an angry mood; brought face to face with a problem that appeared impossible of solution. Not deeming himself capable of anything so trivial as a foolish infatuation, he had fallen passionately in love at first sight and so unfortunately had Coranna. He could



gauge the latter's feeling by his own. In a fair race the odds would all be against him. In any comparison with Coranna he would suffer, and though he might sneer, he must own to himself that Coranna had the start. Only through treachery had he the least hope of success and he feared that Leguay could not afford to antagonize his partner. Charlie had been deceived as to his real character so far simply because he had not permitted a trace of it to be seen. He had never wronged his partner in the least. He liked Charlie well enough and heretofore their interests had not clashed. Would it be possible to deceive him? Charlie was pure hearted, but he had never shown himself deficient in insight. Estelle might help him. She, too, was interested, and fertile in resource. He had called at her apartments last evening, but found that she had not returned to the city. A room was arranged for Leguay's temporary occupation at the residence of his sister and there he had remained to pass a restless night. When he got to the door of the office it jarred upon him to hear a sound of chattering and laughing in place of the usual quite. On entering he found everybody trying to talk to him at once.

“Your,” began the office boy.

“Sah,” from the porter.

“Sir, I beg leave to announce,” interrupted a pompous old gentleman he did not remember to have seen before.



“Your uncle has —” the stenographer called, raising his voice which was instantly smothered by a shower of papers Coranna threw at him.

“Say another word, if you dare! This is my news. Here I have been waiting around all morning and now you want to cheat me out of telling it. You can just keep still.”

The youth subsided amidst a general laugh. Coranna hurried forward. “I have some pleasant news for you, Henri, something that will surprise you.”

“Nothing in that line will surprise me,” returned Leguay almost sullenly, “something pleasant is always happening to you. You are one of fortune’s favorites.”

“How do you think that role will become you, Henri? You’re the lucky individual this time. Have you heard from your Uncle Denton lately?”

“No — not for about a year. Why?”

“He is dead.”

“Indeed — and you call that pleasant news! Am sorry to hear it. I very seldom saw the old gentleman, but he was always quite civil to me.”

“I thought you could scarcely feel a personal loss under the circumstances; that is, you saw so little of him; he has left you all his fortune.”

“Never — why, what has become of his son?”

“It seems that he died a short time ago. Mr. Denton made a will in your favor immediately and had barely time to conclude it when he too was called.



It is a handsome property ; enough to assure you of a good income, so this gentleman informs me," introducing his late uncle's lawyer.

Astonished and confused, Leguay found nothing to say. He was eagerly interested, for money was the one thing he craved above all others. At least this might have been said a day previous. How absurdly eager and delighted Charlie was.

"The funeral takes place to-morrow, if you desire to attend it you will have to leave on the next train over the O. & H." announced the lawyer.

"What time does the train start?" inquired Leguay.

"I don't know exactly, but very soon; I leave for the depot at once."

"Go and find out when the next train leaves," Coranna called to the boy. "If I were in your place, Henri, I would go and attend to affairs at once. I'll try to manage without you for a week or two, although I will have my hands full and no mistake."

"Train starts in half an hour," announced the office boy returning.

"Denton Place is some distance off the railroad; I should advise you to a — take a few things. It will take some time to arrange Mr. Denton's affairs, I assure you."

"That's so, thanks for the suggestion, I had a valise around here, somewhere," said Leguay, beginning to search.



“Here it is,” and the boy hauled it out.  
“Pshaw, it’s locked.”

“Yes, I locked it and put the key somewhere — where I should be sure to know where it was, I wish I could think.”

“Here it is, tied to the lock,” remarked Coranna.

“My clothes are all over the room in there. Bring me a few of them, quick; I have not got a moment to lose. Have you lost your senses, boy? How can I put a stovepipe into this grip. Bring me a few collars. They are in a bundle on the right-hand side.”

“I’ll get them, myself,” volunteered Coranna, and he withdrew. Returning with the bundle, he cut the strings that bound it and presently the floor was strewn with ribbons, gloves, and divers other articles of feminine apparel. “How singular,” he ejaculated.

“Oh, that’s a bundle Estelle had sent here,” groaned Leguay. “Lock the door, I hear somebody coming. What on earth do I want with a photograph album and a scent bottle? Be careful, that’s attar of roses. Great Cæsar, if you haven’t spilt the stuff all over me, and it will smell forever. If Estelle comes home before I get back, tell her to come out to Denton. Charlie, you’ll find those papers you wanted in the safe and —”

Here some one on the outside began knocking and rattling at the door. “There has been an ac-



cident and you can't come in," shouted the office boy through the key-hole.

"Oh, I just wanted to say that Mr. M. made a mistake. That train starts over the O. & H. in fifteen minutes."

"You'll have to hurry then," declared Coranna, who had succeeded in getting the right bundle and was jamming its contents into the valise at a great rate. "You had better be off right now. Telegraph and I'll send you anything you need. Good-bye."

"Here, I'll have to go to the funeral, perfumed, like a popinjay," grumbled Leguay.

The valise had been crammed to an extent that did not permit of its closing. "I've a good mind not to go at all," he declared, kicking at it impatiently.

"Oh, that would never do," answered Coranna, throwing half the things out.

"The driver says he won't try to make the depot in less than five minutes," called the boy.

Leguay seized the valise, from which a sleeve was dragging and hurried off trying to fasten it as he went and responding gruffly to the last good-byes. Even his unexpected good fortune had failed to put him into good humor, though he could make no pretense of grief, for he had never met his cousin and his uncle but rarely.

"Here, boys, you must fix up this office right away. It looks as if a whirlwind had struck it. I want those articles put back in that bundle precisely as they were. Won't Henri catch it when



Estelle comes home! An engagement for every night this week, and Henri gone in the day-time. I shall have to settle down to business." He sat down, but continued at his desk only a few moments, then pushing his papers away he arose. "I couldn't work to-day if salvation depended on it. But I ought to, it is really pressing. What can be the matter with me?"

Re-seating himself he made a second attempt, but the song that had been thrilling in his heart all morning burst forth. Whenever Coranna was very happy he sang, to the great delight of the office boy, who gesticulated frantically to the others to stop making a noise, and, all unmindful of his audience of three, Coranna's happy voice rang out: —

"It is better to laugh than be sighing,  
When we think how life's moments are flying,  
For each sorrow, fate ever is bringing,  
There's a pleasure in store for us springing.

Tho' our joys, like the waves in the sunshine,  
Gleam awhile then be lost to the sight,  
Yet for each sparkling ray that so passes away,  
Comes another more brilliant and light.

Then 'tis better to laugh than be sighing,  
They are wise who resolve to be gay,  
When we think how life's moments are flying,  
O enjoy pleasure's gift while we may."

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"Are you sure you are awake, Lutie?" inquired Mrs. Melton when, at twelve o'clock, that young



lady succeeded in making her way down-stairs and began inquiring pathetically for breakfast.

“Yes, but I am tired,” she replied, sinking languidly into a chair and clasping her hands above her head; “just comfortably and deliciously tired. I’m glad that I am; I like to be tired.”

“What a child you are, Lutie, and what a delight you take in life. I only wish ” — and the rest was a sigh.

“Now, Clara, are you going to give me anything to eat? Besides being tired I’m hungry. Tired and hungry, oh how doleful it sounds,” in a tone of mock pathos to which the surrounding luxury proved a merry contrast.

“Will you take tea, coffee, or chocolate?”

“Coffee, please.”

“You haven’t appeared much too soon. I expect Mr. Coranna shortly. You will like Charlie, I am sure. He is not at all rich, but as far as society is concerned he stands at the very top. His mother is a fine old lady, but let me warn you she is very fastidious.”

“Were the people I met last night supposed to be very fastidious?”

“Yes, my dear, you may consider that you have met some of our best people. But I am not going to flatter you. You must have felt your own success.”

“I tried to be pleasant and they acted just lovely, not the least bit stiff or what do you call it — un-



approachable? The girls tried to scare me out of coming. They said that if you weren't as rich as Croesus they'd freeze you out in Magnorum."

"I'd like to see them try to freeze out anybody that was visiting me," flashed Mrs. Melton.

"We can't claim that they tried the freezing-out process last night. I was rather uncomfortably warm most of the time," laughed Lutie.

"You mischief, you are either a natural flirt or have practiced extensively somewhere."

"Nowhere."

"Keep the flirting on your own side and you will be all right. Watch that nobody flirts with you. It is wicked in that case. Mr. Coranna said he would call to-day. I treat Charlie and Henri Leguay just as if they were brothers. I have known them both since I was a girl. I have asked Charlie to assist me while you are here, I believe Henri is a little put out about it. He was my brother's chum at college and always expects to be preferred; but it just happened that Charlie was with me at the time and I didn't give the matter a second thought. I expect Henri will call too, though not so soon; but pshaw, let him pout. We will get along very nicely without him."

"Oh, I am so glad it is not to be Mr. Leguay. I don't like him at all," cried Lutie impetuously. "I think he looks mean. You must forgive me," she continued softly, "I ought not to speak so of your friend."



“ Oh, never mind ; but you are mistaken in Henri, Lutie, he is the best of brothers. He has one sister, Estelle, and he is very devoted to her. By the way, I have heard her name linked with that of Charlie Coranna quite often ; but there is nothing in it ; I am sure Charlie has never paid her more than the ordinary attention due the sister of his best friend. I believe they say that she is in love with him, but I dare say it is all mere gossip. My dear, how I envy you your complexion ; not one woman in a thousand could wear that shade of green and in broad daylight, too.”

“ That’s one advantage of being a Dutch girl,” laughed Lutie. “ When my great-grandmother came over in — it couldn’t have been the Mayflower that wasn’t the name of the Dutch ship — she had the fairest complexion and the longest hair in the crowd.”

“ Here comes Charlie now ; don’t mind Lutie, he is always entirely at home here. Dishabille, nonsense ; your dress is entirely proper child ; sit still.” Lutie had half risen, intending to disappear ; but Coranna’s entrance prevented this and she sank back in her chair feeling slightly confused. Coranna came forward looking delighted. “ Good morning, ladies, I am in luck, as usual. Henri said this morning that I was always lucky. After this I will believe him.”

“ Is there any news, Charlie ?” began Mrs. Melton, trying to engage his attention until Lutie should



recover her composure. Charlie was quite willing to converse with Mrs. Melton only, but he would not keep his eyes off Lutie.

“I have come to beg the honor of taking Miss Van Straat for a drive in my cutter. Do you like sleighing, Miss Van Straat? I assure you we make quite a point of it here in Magnorum.”

Lutie let her pleasure at the prospect shine in her face and looked inquiringly at Mrs. Melton. “Of course you are to go, child. Go and dress at once, that is if you have finished your breakfast. Don’t keep her out too long, Charlie, for I want her to be at home in time to get well acquainted with Frank before dinner.”

“I have no intention of freezing her, I assure you, and if I keep her out that long she would be a mere icicle,” returned Coranna merrily.

“Aren’t you going too, Mrs. Melton?”

“Oh no, dear, there is never room for three in a cutter. I am going to let Charlie have you all to himself and I warn you that he will talk your ears tired. Remember that you are to tell me every word that he says.”

“Oh, I will be sure to do that,” laughed Lutie, blushing making her escape.

“Your ball was a great success, Clara, and as to your little friend she has taken all hearts by storm.”

“I’m glad to hear it. You see she is little more than a child and so absurdly happy I hope she may be as happy all her life.”



“So do I,” very earnestly.

“But it is not always the case that our lives are happy, even when they begin brightly, I mean”—and she glanced toward the window with a sigh. Coranna’s face fell and he regarded her anxiously, feeling the sincerest interest in her welfare. “Oh don’t be alarmed, Charlie, Frank is perfect when he is around; but I don’t like having him away so much.”

“His business demands it.”

“Oh, yes, everything must give away to business,” pettishly.

“That’s about the truth, Clara. You ladies don’t begin to understand. Neglect business and it will very soon neglect you.”

Lutie’s entrance closed the discussion. Mrs. Melton regarded her anxiously. She was thinking of her dress. Coranna’s eyes were taking in her face. He liked the light of anticipated pleasure in it and wondered why so many ladies considered expression a crime.

“Now you will have a chance to see Magnorum by daylight, Lutie.”

“If it proves as attractive as it was by gaslight I am sure I will have no reason to complain.”

“Daylight reveals things as they are, remember. Take good care of her, Charlie.”

“Most assuredly I will.” They were soon ensconced in the sleigh with the horses at a brisk trot and the bells merrily jingling. Coranna had his



hands full with his ponies at first and said little; but he found time for a good many glances. Would she prove to be an interesting companion? There were so many pretty women. They could dance and that was all. He longed to converse and was impatient that his horses were so restive. At length they quieted a little and Coranna broke the silence gently with a remark about the snow, leading on skillfully to the streets, the architecture, the ball, the people, and finding answers possible, he disregarded the usual limit and let the conversation range to many subjects. How charming to find himself matched in wit if not in wisdom! Forgetting his horses for an instant they came very near being turned over in the snow; then he felt foolish and braced himself against a recurrence of anything so idiotic. Neither could have told what was making their drive so exquisitely enjoyable. It was broad daylight and everything looked prosaic enough. Neither was conscious of the fact that they were beginning to quaff that elixir which had proved to many so delicious and then again — so fatal.

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In the meantime Mr. Melton had arrived, but his usually joyous welcome had been marred. His wife had a grievance and for the first time in their married life had stated it. “Frank, I do so hate



having you away all the time; I wish you would stop traveling and stay home."

"That's what I am going to do, by and bye, Clara; but I can't just now; I am going to see that you are a rich woman first."

"Yes — but when?"

"Oh, in the course of time."

"But the time never seems to come, Frank. Why don't you change and come and do business here in Magnorum. Anybody who can make money anywhere can make it in Magnorum. Papa always said so."

"If you recollect, Clara, your father made all his money in the South. If you have any money to spend you can always get away with it here in Magnorum," he responded in a mimicking tone.

"I'm lonely here all by myself."

"All by yourself with a houseful of guests! Why the descriptions of your entertainments would fill a volume a year! You don't know what a delight I take in reading them, Clara. You are a regular little sovereign, in a social way. To talk of being lonely, how preposterous!"

"If you love me, you would understand."

"If — Merciful Heaven, what are we coming to! You are the only person I ever did love. You are the only woman I ever would have married. I never could stand the ordinary woman," turning up his nose.

Mrs. Melton laughed. "What made you always dislike women so, Frank?"



“ They haven’t any sense, somehow.”

“ I thought you had got over that entirely.”

“ Oh, I treat them all civilly on your account. I don’t really like them.”

“ But I don’t need so much money, Frank; I will economize.”

“ Don’t, Clara, please don’t. I hate economy and you know lots about it, don’t you? Your whole family practiced it on the old plantation. You don’t know what it is to be poor, Clara. I was poor once and I hated it. If I were poor again I’d swear, I declare I would. And so would you, Clara.”

“ Speak for yourself, Frank. The idea of anything ever making me swear!” protested Mrs. Melton.

“ Outside of the satisfaction of knowing that my business is going on well, I don’t enjoy my trips much, Clara. The people *you* meet are all ladies and gentlemen, at least to a certain extent; but I come in contact with all sorts of persons and things, rough, coarse, vulgar. They jar on my nerves terribly at times and you would never be able to stand it at all. But matters are in such a state that I will have to travel for some time to come and then I will be able to come here to Magnorum and hold my own.”

“ Frank, I don’t believe much in that way of doing, I had rather that you would arrange your affairs even at a loss and stay at home.”

“ If I should attempt anything of the sort at



present, Clara, I fear the result. There is no telling where we would wind up."

"I should be satisfied in any case."

"You only think so, Clara. You don't understand business and you had best let me manage mine in my own way. After all the disagreeables I encounter, this home of ours is a little Paradise to me and I am in it every minute that I can be, I assure you; but to-day you have worried me — don't ever mention this subject again, please." And Mrs. Melton never did.

Upon returning from her drive Lutie was delighted to hear of the arrival of Mr. Melton and felt a little curious to see him, having heard a great deal of "Frank." She found him a gentlemanly fellow, with a very quiet manner, faultlessly inexpressive.

"What do we do this evening, dearest?" he inquired at dinner.

"We are going to the opera first. I want to hear the 'Bijou Song.'"

"What a fascination that song has for you, Clara. I don't fancy it a great deal myself. Any sensible woman would have made the same choice. Don't you think so, Miss Lutie?"

"I thought the *denouement* proved that she chose very unwisely," declared Lutie, who was not to be caught napping.

"After that we go to Mrs. Colter's reception. Are you very tired, Frank?"

"Not too tired. Does Coranna accompany you?"



“No, but we will meet him at Mrs. Colter’s. Henri was to have been with us, but he has been called from town by the death of a relative, his uncle, I believe it is.”

“Ah, that’s too bad ; I am going myself.”

They did not remain long at the opera, much to Lutie’s relief, for Faust had a depressing effect on her. At the reception they arrived late. A chill pervaded the atmosphere. The guests had drifted off into cliques, there was little conversation, and stagnation seemed inevitable. The entrance of Mrs. Melton and her party was hailed as a relief. Lutie’s sleigh ride had acted as a tonic. Her merriment was infectious. Gradually the atmosphere became permeated with that indefinable something that causes a gathering to be afterwards alluded to as a brilliant affair. Lutie had snatched victory from defeat and quite won the heart of her good-natured hostess, who had been much distressed at the former prospect and always mentioned Lutie thereafter in most flattering terms. Mrs. Melton now found the proper guidance of her young friend’s movements no easy task. Lutie was in demand on all sides. Her presence at any gathering seemed to guarantee its success. Mrs. Melton was pleased and a little anxious. Sometimes this had the effect of turning a girl’s head and then her actions became ridiculous. But alarm was impossible in Lutie’s case. She was so natural, easy, serene. Society is fickle. Would it fawn upon her to-day and drop her



to-morrow? Coranna continued in close attendance. Other gentlemen would gladly have relieved him of all further responsibility, but he showed no disposition to permit himself to be displaced. It is an enviable position to escort the favorite, even if she is merely pretty. But Lutie was more, she was intellectual. Her conversation won upon him. She was charming. Coranna was drifting. He was happy and he did not trouble himself to inquire into the why or wherefore. Lutie seemed content in his society and tacitly to prefer it to any other. Coranna took no cognizance of his rivals. She showed no partiality. He had done no love-making — their acquaintance had been so brief. Yet he felt as if he knew her better than any other woman because they had met so constantly. Things were well as they were. But drifting, however pleasant, is usually dangerous. Sooner or later there comes a shock, and Coranna was destined to receive one.

It so happened that the Texel's gave a ball. "And we are invited, my dear," as Mrs. Melton said. "You are in luck, Lutie. I was in Magnorum five years before I was invited to a Texel ball. They say Mrs. Colter had her first invitation framed."

"Oh, Mrs. Melton, you don't mean to say anybody could be so — so —"

"Idiotic — well, I will say I never saw it myself, and a great many things are said that have not even a grain of truth for a foundation. However, when you go to a Texel ball you have reached the summit



in Magnorum. You will then have only royalty to conquer."

"I wonder if you will ever conquer royalty," mused Lutie.

"I don't know. Frank and I went to Europe on our wedding tour, but we didn't think of conquering anything then," with a sigh, "except perhaps the landlords."

"I don't think I shall ever go to Europe," remarked Lutie. "I am satisfied here, and I don't like the ocean. What is there so remarkable about these Texels?"

"Oh, everything, family, fortune, house, servants. Nothing to be desired from any point of view. You must look to your dress, Lutie. I want you to choose some color in which you have not appeared."

"It seems to me I have exhausted everything but pink, and I very seldom wear that."

"It would be pretty hard for me to think of a color in which I had not yet appeared," laughed Mrs. Melton. Lutie had begun to weary a little ere the much discussed affair took place and thought seriously of remaining at home; but Mrs. Melton would not hear of this. "Don't you feel amply repaid for exerting yourself a little?" she inquired of Lutie as they wended their way through the rooms of the Texel mansion.

"Indeed I do. It reminds me of the House Beautiful or the Enchanted Castle. All that is



needed to complete the picture is the fairy prince."

"Mr. Texel will have to pose for that, Lutie. Here he comes. I did not know that he was in town. He has appeared since our arrival." The gentleman was soon at their side. He was on excellent terms with Mrs. Melton, and on being presented to Lutie almost immediately asked her to dance. Lutie wondered how anybody with a recognized right to live could have succeeded in acquiring a manner so thoroughly unassuming. A dance, an ice, and a brief chat. But even the fairest of ladies cannot monopolize the host and at length he reluctantly handed her over to the tender mercies of his friend Tromp. The waltz that followed exhausted Lutie and led her to believe that her partner's millions must have settled in his feet. Tromp treated her to a fulsome dose of flattery, telling her all her good points to her face, after a manner of description applicable to his favorite animal — the horse. Coranna caught sight of the distressed look on her face and sauntered up to the group in which they were standing. Getting within ear-shot he sang in a whisper that she alone could hear :

"Oh she looked sweet  
As the little flower that grows in the wheat,  
With her cheeks like a rose and her lips like a cherry,  
And sure and you're welcome to Twickenham town."



Before she had a chance to turn he had vanished. Tromp, seeing the radiant light on her face, congratulated himself on being so entertaining, and Texel coming up to claim another dance considered it his welcome. As for Lutie, her heart fluttered. It was the first time Mr. Coranna had ever complimented her audibly. No one else had perceived the little episode, but to Lutie it was the event of the evening.

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Mrs. Melton decided to have a tea, a very informal affair, at which all of her acquaintances found themselves welcome. Mr. Melton was at home, but he did not consider his appearance necessary. He was busy in his study, but he left both doors open and the few men who strayed about at such times understood that they were welcome to come in and have a chat. As a rule he was not disturbed much, but to-day Mrs. Melton found the whole character of her tea to be changing. At first the men dropped shyly in by twos and threes, then they came thicker and faster until they began to outnumber the fair sex. Mrs. Melton, the mischief, was delighted and rightly guessed the state of affairs. Each one of them thought he would sneak around and have Lutie all to himself for an afternoon and every man of them found that his friend's mind had



taken the same turn. Mr. Melton was writing away peacefully, unconscious of anything unusual, when a rap at the side of his open door aroused his attention.

“Got a moment to spa’ a man? Want to see you on pawticular bithiness.”

“Why, certainly, Tromp, come in, glad to see you at any time,” he called unceremoniously, swinging about in his chair.

“You’ve got a young lady vithiting at your houth?”

“You mean Miss Van Straat?”

“Jutht tho, hath the got any moneyth?”

“None to speak of,” answered Melton.

“Ah, thath too ba-a-d. Every woman ought to have thome moneyth. Well I’ll mar’ her enhow. She seemth to be sthruck on me.”

“Ah, indeed,” responded Melton dryly.

“Pon honah it looksth like it. She seemth tickled to death when I dance with her, by Jove. Doeth the belong to any kind of a family?”

“Very good family, I understand. Her relatives are almost all dead, however.”

“So much the better. Ma and the girlth will raith the dickenth, I thppose, but I don’ care. I’ll buy her another houth and give her money enough to dwive ’em crazthy.”

Tromp’s calm assurance nettled Melton and he longed to give him an answer that would make his head swim. But it was very little of his affair, after



all, he reasoned. He hardly thought that Lutie would fancy Tromp, but a lady might not thank him for rejecting a suitor without consulting her, especially when that suitor happened to be a millionaire.

"We'll consider it settled then," said Tromp.

"Certainly, as far as I am concerned," began Melton; "but the girl?"

"Oh, the's all right, I'll take care of her," drawled Tromp as he disappeared with a look that showed wonders possible. Melton puckered up his mouth and elevated his eyebrows. He had scarcely settled back to his work when a new comer appeared. It was none other than young Mortar, the only scion of an old historic family whose coffers had run low. Mortar was now a student at Yale and because of a certain fine color in his cheeks and a unique sweetness of manner was generally known by the endearing name of Pinkie.

"I say, Mr. Melton," he cried, standing at the threshold with a distressed look on his face.

"Well, is that you, Pinkie? Glad to see you. Don't stand there. Come in and take a seat."

Mortar sat down and blushed steadily for some moments, never raising his eyes from the carpet. "I say Mr. Melton," he began again.

"Well, what is it?" repeated Mr. Melton emphatically.

"I say, Mr. Melton, I'm gone on Miss Lutie Van Straat, I am awfully, I want to marry her. If I can't I don't know what I shall do."



The effect of this announcement was to send Mr. Melton into peals of laughter. He stood up and grabbing Pinkie in his arms gave him a genuine hug and then shook him until his teeth chattered. "What on earth has got into you, Pinkie; I thought you had some sense and were wading into your studies at a rate that would soon send you to the top of the heap. What do you want to get tied to a wife for? Where could you keep her while you went to college? Could you make her a separate allowance?"

"Going to college isn't everything, and money isn't everything, either," protested Pinkie, "plenty of men have been married at eighteen and they got to be great men afterwards and they were very happy and —"

"No, it wouldn't do at all, Pinkie. A man has to have a good start in the world before he can think of marriage," with a great attempt at gravity. "If he has a large fortune he has to stand the chance of losing it and must know how to support a family in any case. To be left without a penny with a wife! I tell you, Pinkie, it's no fun."

"I'll see what Miss Van Straat has to say about it herself," declared the irrepressible Pinkie, rising with great dignity.

Mr. Melton hastily summoned a servant. "Mr. Mortar's hat and coat, he has been suddenly taken ill," and before the amazed youth had time to collect his wits, Melton had helped him into his coat



and dismissed the servant. "You had better step out the window here, Pinkie. It is low enough and you won't run the risk of meeting any one you know. You look rather excited." Exit Pinkie. And he bribed every servant in his house in turn to carry his glowing words of devotion to the object thereof. But Melton was on the watch, bought them at a higher figure, consigned them to the still more glowing bosom of the grate-fire and kept a sharp lookout until that heart-broken hero had returned to Yale. There was real danger in that case, for a more attractive youth than Pinkie could scarce be found.

Ere Melton had time to reseate himself a gentleman sauntered up to the door and he perceived that he was to have a third visitor. Texel entered and after a few preliminary remarks, Melton offered him a cigar and they settled down to a smoke.

"I am not much in the habit of taking tea; but that little girl you have staying with you handed me a cup to-day and I swallowed it red hot without thinking until it was down. I thought then. She is a most uncommonly beautiful girl."

"I think so myself, and Mrs. Melton is quite wrapt up in her."

"Is there any objection to have the doors closed?" inquired Texel.

"None whatever," returned Melton, wondering what state secret Texel had to impart.

"I am very much interested in this young lady,"



he began slowly, feeling his way. "Van Straat,—the name seems familiar, and yet I can't place the family."

"Probably not. They have not resided in the city during this century, though they came here in the seventeen hundreds. The girl is poor. Her father was a minister."

"She has exquisite manners and perfect taste."

"And she is a rare conversationalist," put in Mr. Melton.

"There is always such a crowd about her that I have been scarcely been able to judge. I should like an opportunity of seeing her alone once in a while."

"I—I hardly believe I understand you. The girl is very young, you know, and I ah—feel quite responsible. In your case you know any attention would cause so much comment I can't have the little girl's chances spoiled," with a laugh.

"I should like to know her a little better before I speak of marriage."

"I did not think you were a marrying man."

"I want to marry this girl if I can win her affection."

"You won't get her if you can't."

"Is she that kind of a girl?"

"Just so."

"That's nice."

"Yes, the girl is innocent. She has no idea of the value of money; but of course we don't intend to let everybody and anybody come to see her.



“Of course not.”

“As for myself, I don’t see what more a man would want in a wife unless he was looking for rank or money.”

“Rank be bothered; I don’t have to look for money. If I haven’t got enough of that commodity I don’t know who has! There is just one thing that bothers me. Women will marry for money. I don’t blame them; they can very seldom get it in any other way. I want to make a sure thing, of not being married for mine, if I can.

“I don’t blame you,” returned Melton a little wearily, and with that they closed the discussion.

Texel departed and Melton rose and yawned. “What on earth does a man do when he has a lot of daughters to marry? It would naturally wear me out.”

“Well, Frank, have you been disturbed much to-day?” asked Mrs. Melton, entering when all her guests had departed.

“It was not altogether a disturbance, Clara. I like society well enough when I don’t have to take the brunt of things. I have heard a good deal of one subject to-day. The boys are all getting badly broken up on your little friend. If she wants to marry it looks as if she were going to have plenty of suitors. Do you think she wants to marry?”

“Why, of course she does,” answered Mrs. Melton hastily. “What do you suppose she wants to do? Be an old maid?”



“You can’t tell what she wants to do by looking at her, by any means.”

“Lutie is as impenetrable as a sphinx. Her only aim in life seems to be to enjoy and to help others to enjoyment. How did you come to speak of this, Frank?”

“The men have been asking about her. There’s Tromp, worth a cool million at least, and thinks he has only to throw the handkerchief.”

“He don’t know Lutie,” murmured Mrs. Melton softly.

“And Texel.”

“He doesn’t want to marry her!”

“Well, he wanted to come and see her at first and I let him understand that I wouldn’t have any meaningless hanging around—”

“Frank!”

“Well, I’m blunt; always have been; what’s the use of letting a man like him show her any attention and have it buzzed all over the city, if he don’t intend marriage? He came square up to the point then. I was amazed at his taking me into confidence. He is usually so close, but he seemed to find it impossible to make any headway without informing us.”

“Trust me for that,” returned Mrs. Melton. “I am delighted on Lutie’s account. Who would have dreamt it? More than a million, in his case, I am sure.”

“I should think so. But he can’t make any-



thing out of the girl, either. You see he has only had a few glimpses of her really, but she takes his fancy and if everything goes well—the die is cast.”

“What will his mother have to say to all this?”

“I don’t think she will object. You see he has beat about the bush so long that the old lady is getting afraid that he will never be induced to marry at all. I believe she will favor the match.”

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Mrs. Melton had scarcely opened her eyes the next morning when she was informed by her maid that a gentleman wished to see her. “At this unearthly hour? Why, where does the man come from? Did he give you his name? What does he look like?” she demanded all in a breath.

“A very big man, madam, very fat, with a very long coat, and a big scarf around his neck.”

Mrs. Melton laughed merrily, and her curiosity accelerated her toilet. On descending she found a man who answered well to her maid’s description. He rose as she entered, and Mrs. Melton greeted him pleasantly, wondering what he might want.

“Vat haf you done mit mine neeze?” he queried.

“I hardly believe I understand you,” faltered Mrs. Melton.



“ Mine neeze Loodie, Loodie Van Stra-a-t. She write to me if she can come and zee you and I taught she bin here.”

“ Oh, Lutie, you mean, Lutie Van Straat,” said Mrs. Melton, perceiving that the man was merely awkward and meant no discourtesy.

“ Yes, I bin her onkle.”

“ Her uncle and her guardian, too, are you not? I am very glad to meet you,” graciously. “ Lutie is with me, and I believe she has been enjoying herself. We all find her charming.”

“ Yez, dot Loodie vos some purty. I bin ver partikler mit Loodie. She tell me ver she go; I don know you aber; I wride mine lawyer and he say you bin very good vomans, vay up. I was very partikler mit Loodie. Her fader vas deat — a very good man he vas, very, but he makes very leedle money. Ver you got dot girl, I likes to see her a leedle.”

“ Certainly, you can see her at once — that is, presently,” she corrected, recollecting that her young friend was probably fast asleep. She then sent orders for Lutie to join her as soon as possible. “ Won’t you be able to stay with us for awhile yourself, Mr. Van Straat?”

“ Many tanks; no, I haf much pizness vile I bin here. Don’t you tink dot girl vas long coming?”

“ It has been but a few moments since I sent for her,” returned Mrs. Melton.

Mr. Van Straat continued to be very uneasy.



“Ven she dond come I dond meet dot man vot I I say I meet in half an hour and he vas a long vay from here, too. Vot you tink keep dot Loodie?”

“I’m not quite sure she was awake when I sent for her,” confessed Mrs. Melton, feeling a little pressed. Just then Lutie entered, trying to repress a gap and looking deliciously pretty.

“Vell, you leedle shleepy heat is dot vot you do in Magnorum?” giving her a genuine bear’s hug. “Vell vat you tink,” he began, without giving her a chance to speak. “I py vun big lot of veat for very leedle, and I sell him for very much; I do dot vun, two, tree times, I make much money from dot, you know. Mein son ben an artist py de old coundry.”

“That’s so, uncle, I had almost forgotten him.”

“Vell, it vas no uze, I go der ven I bin poor aber I make plenty money dere in Chicago und now it bin uze und I go to dot coundry und I bin some, und I take you mit. Mein son haf vun great friend. She bin ein baroness and she marry you on ein tidle.”

“But really, uncle, I don’t think I should care to go to Holland, I—I—”

“Yes, but you vas vun leedle girl; ver you stay here? You must comen mit me. In tree veeks I take you mit. Good py, I vill call again,” and without further ado, he marched off.

“Oh, what will I do?” cried Lutie to Mrs. Mel-



ton. "I don't want to live in Holland; I should be homesick every minute, I know I should."

"Well, he can't force you to go to Holland, Lutie."

"I don't know. You see I have always been at school, and in vacation I stayed with Mrs. Kent, who used to be papa's housekeeper, and she said I could always have a home with her. But I don't want to offend my uncle, although he is only a distant relative — really. He belongs to that branch of the family that stayed in Holland. You see he's my guardian and was very kind when papa died, and he's just wonderful at business; I didn't expect to have a cent, but he managed to get something for me somehow. I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world."

"Well, don't get excited dear, I'll go and see Frank about it. He'll find some way out of it," and she started in search of her husband with her mind brimful of the news. "Frank, do wake up and get your wits about you; Lutie's uncle has come and he wants to take her off to Europe; just as we were beginning to have a nice time, too."

"Clara, do give a man some peace. I thought the house was on fire."

"I am so provoked, it will interfere with all my plans."

"Naturally. Who does this young lady's uncle happen to be?"

"Van Straat. He comes from Chicago. Guess



what? He sent on to his lawyer and asked if I were a fit person for his niece to associate with, and then told me about it right to my face — oo — the dreadful creature!” and she gave a little scream.

“Did he, though?” laughed Melton. “Van Straat, of Chicago. First-class old fellow. Solid for cash.”

“But I don’t want Lutie to go; I never had a friend I liked so much.”

“Don’t bother your head about it, Clara; let me think awhile.”

Mrs. Melton bit her tongue and managed to keep silence, eyeing her husband meanwhile. “Have you thought of anything?” she inquired at length.

“Yes, but don’t ask me any questions, Clara; I have an idea that matters can be brought about all right,” and he smiled so radiantly that Mrs. Melton felt encouraged.

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Mrs. Melton took the matter of Lutie’s departure to heart, much to the amusement of her husband, who had little faith in women’s friendships. They had planned a visit to a studio, but she insisted on remaining at home, although Lutie was compelled to keep the engagement. Coranna called in the meantime. “Won’t we miss Lutie when she is gone” she demanded, barely taking time to greet him.



“Gone! gone where?” gasped Coranna.

“Why, I had forgotten to tell you and I have had nothing else on my mind all day. Lutie’s uncle has come from Chicago and he is going to take her to Europe.”

“When?” recovering himself somewhat.

“In three weeks.”

Coranna paid little heed to the rest of the conversation, but he hoped, upon taking his departure, that he had not made a fool of himself. Three weeks! His head swam. Only three weeks and she would be gone, out of his life, perhaps forever. What did this mean? A loss of all the sunshine, all the light of life. Why, he had fallen in love with the girl all unperceived? Now he became conscious of the reality of love. Her staying meant joy and her going—the idea was intolerable. But she should not go, he mightily resolved. How he had wasted his opportunity since her arrival? Why had he not made better use of his time? Coranna had not permitted a word of love to cross his lips. She was so young and he knew that he had been placed at once on a familiar footing owing to his reputation as a *chevalier sans reproche*. Now he scarcely knew how to begin. He had always imagined, if he ever did take a notion to marry, a delicious season of wooing with exquisite gradations. Precipitation was not according to his taste. He wandered about the streets for some time wrapt in thought, unconscious of his surroundings. There



had been few crises in his life, but he felt now that one was approaching. Fortune had hitherto caressed him, but we all know she is a fickle dame. Did Lutie love him? Hardly as yet. Then he must win her and that was what he resolved to do.

Mrs. Melton laughed when he made his appearance the next evening. "Actually, Charlie, you look blue, something I never observed before. Frank and I are going out. You had better go in and have a chat with Lutie; she owns herself tired for once and I promised to let her rest. You will find her in the library."

Coranna proceeded and entered into her presence unannounced. She had drawn a sofa to the fireside and was sitting at ease in the corner. "Mrs. Melton told me I should find you here," he began apologetically. She arose to receive him without surprise and then sank back gracefully into her former position.

"Mrs. Melton has allowed most of the servants to go out to-night. They have a ball or something, I believe."

Coranna took a seat in an arm-chair opposite. They conversed pleasantly for a while then he rose and crossed over and stood near her. "You will let me sit here beside you, will you not?" She bowed assent, with a slightly heightened color. Coming closer he took her hand, held it an instant, and bent and kissed it. Lutie looked startled and made



a quick movement to withdraw it. "Do you dislike me?" With a reproachful glance.

"Dislike you, no, indeed, Mr. Coranna; how — how could I —" a fine flush overspreading her face.

"I came here this evening to tell you that I love you. Don't — don't go away. You must stay and hear me at least." Lutie had risen and was standing white and trembling at his side. In a moment she reseated herself with eyes cast down and face immovable. "I know it is but a short time since we met, but we have been together so much it seems as if we had known each other always, does it not?"

"Yes," she answered simply.

"I never knew that there was anything real about love until I met you," he continued eagerly. "I know now that the moment I caught sight of your face, I loved you. There, I have startled you," he continued soothingly, "won't you listen to me, won't you let me kiss you."

"Oh, no," cried Lutie, springing up, "I have never let any gentleman kiss me, indeed I haven't."

"Well, I'm glad you haven't," laughed Coranna, "but you'll have to begin some time and this is a very good time now — with me."

"You are jesting," said Lutie with quick displeasure.

"Jesting!" groaned Coranna, "if you could only know what anxiety I have suffered during the last twenty-four hours you would pity me. Here I thought you were going to stay in New York ever



so long and now I hear you are going to Europe, and my whole heart is set upon having you for my wife. I intended to court you in the regular fashion, Lutie, but," pathetically, "there isn't time."

Lutie kept turning pale and red by turns during this speech and finally laughed. "Tell me that you can learn to love me, Lutie. I don't know what I shall do if you send me away. You must love me—you must—say that you will. Say that you will be my wife."

"Do you really care for me so much? You have known me such a little while," murmured Lutie, trembling more and more.

"Lutie, you can tell me now if you love me or whether you ever will love me, don't you know that you can?" Lutie continued silent. Coranna paced the room several times and then came and stood by her side and looked sharply at her face. She gave no sign. He was now very much excited and in terrible suspense. "Please say something. This silence is so cruel. Let me know how you feel about it. Don't be so frightened, child. It is not a crime to love."

"What shall I say," said Lutie, rising and letting him fold her in his arms.

"Say nothing. This is all the reply I will ever ask. To make you happy will be the first object of my life. Heaven has granted me my dearest wish, my darling, mine, mine, mine forever.



Lutie lost no time in informing Mrs. Melton of her engagement to Coranna, who in turn told her husband. "Honestly, Clara, I am astonished. I had no idea she would marry the first man who proposed to her and on so short an acquaintance! Do you think she can care for him?"

"Of course she does," responded Mrs. Melton, "why should she marry him else?"

"There is no earthly reason why she should throw herself away on Coranna with Texel in view. But then she doesn't know about him; I had quite forgotten that. I will make it my business to inform her at once. Come along, Clara. Our little friend might as well make the best of herself."

They found Lutie dreamily watching the coals as they fell apart in the grate fire. The heat accounted for the flush on her cheek, but hardly for the radiant light in her eyes. Melton motioned his wife to keep silence. "Miss Lutie," he began, studying her face intently, "I have some news for you."

"For me," cried Lutie looking up quickly, "what can it be?"

"You have made a great conquest."

"Conquest," repeated Lutie absently. History was her favorite study and the word first presented itself in the light of a *terme militaire*.

"One of the wealthiest gentlemen in our city, in Magnorum, you know, wants you to be his wife. Texel was talking to me about it and I can assure



you that you are the first lady that ever had the chance of attaining that honor."

"Mr. Texel, I am so sorry," returned Lutie gently, "but then it could never be, I could never care for Mr. Texel, I am sure."

"Why, my dear child, you are never going to fly in the face of fortune like that. It is positively sacrilegious. He counts by the million."

"Anyhow, it could never be," returned Lutie, shading her face completely now, "for I have promised to marry Mr. Coranna."

"Coranna is a gentleman. I have nothing to say against him, and he's not poor, either, unless you compare him with Texel, for instance. There are several others almost as rich as Tex., if you particularly object to him. I know men well and they are pretty much alike. Marry the richest, I say. Money is what you want here in Magnorum."

"So that's the way you look at things," flashed Mrs. Melton.

"Oh, it's altogether different with women. There is a vast difference in them and they are not supposed to have any money. I wouldn't have a woman I didn't love around if she were as rich as Croesus."

This produced a general laugh, and Lutie clapped her hands. "I have promised to marry Mr. Coranna," she repeated firmly.

"But what will your uncle say to this?"



“Please don’t tell him anything about the others,” pleaded Lutie quickly, becoming agitated.

“There, he shan’t, dear,” interrupted Mrs. Melton, stooping to give Lutie a kiss. “Charlie is the noblest hearted fellow in the city and I am glad that you are to be his wife.” The atmosphere had now become so warm as to be uncomfortable for Lutie and she rose to retire.

“Now look here, Frank,” declared Mrs. Melton, shaking her finger at her husband when she was well out of the room, “I’m positively ashamed of the way you have grown to worship money. Now you are not going to plot with her uncle to bring about this Texel marriage.”

“Hopelessly in love with Coranna,” laughed Melton. “I am sure it is no affair of mine, Clara. If she wants to be such a little fool I can’t help it and I don’t intend to try. Coranna won’t starve her to death, any way. I only wish I had the chance to marry Texel, that’s all.”

“Why don’t we practice what we preach?” hummed Mrs. Melton.

When Coranna called the next evening he sought Mr. Melton before asking for Lutie. “Lutie and I are engaged, Frank; has she told Mrs. Melton?”

“Yes; allow me to congratulate. You have every reason to be flattered at her preference,” returned Melton, not feeling at liberty to say more.

“I assure you that I am,” declared Coranna, “and now I wish you would help me out a little,



Melton; I want you to introduce me to her uncle. He is her guardian, too, is he not?"

"Yes, Van Straat, of Chicago, you will find him a hard nut to crack, too, I'm afraid."

"Do you think he will object?"

"Don't see why he should at all; but these old fellows are cranky. He is coming here to-night to see Lutie. Just stay here and I will have him shown in when he calls. Will that suit you?"

"Exactly," returned Coranna.

They had not long to wait. Van Straat soon appeared and Coranna found it difficult to suppress his amazement at the sort of personage he proved to be. Melton rose to receive him with great eclat. "Mr. Van Straat, my friend, Mr. Coranna. He wishes to see you on some very particular business, and I believe that in the meantime I will see what has become of Mrs. Melton."

As soon as he had left the room Coranna came directly to the point. "Mr. Van Straat, your niece has consented to be my wife."

"Your vife! Dot girl! Vell, I never yet. Dot girl vas young. Vat she do dot for?"

This was rather a problem for Coranna, who flushed hotly.

"How long you know dot girl?"

"Since she came to Magnorum."

"Vell, dot vas mighty quick pizness. Vell, my cousin was a mighty goot man, but he make no moneys. Dot girl vas poor."



“I understood that the lady was not wealthy. I will have enough for both.”

“Vat is your pizness?”

“I am a lawyer; I have an excellent partner and a pretty fair business; but I don't depend upon it. My father left me an hundred thousand and my mother has five times as much. I know of no reason why she should not leave it to me.”

“Was you ever marrit pefore?”

Coranna permitted himself a laugh at this juncture.

“No, sir; this is my first attempt in that direction.”

“Dot girl vas awful purty. I taught I take her mit und marry her mit ein title.”

“Are you inclined to value a title? That is something none of us Americans have to bestow.”

“Vell, you vas rich und mine neeze vas poor. It must be dot you means vell. Dot vas plain.”

“When I say that I am in love with her I have stated the whole of my side of the case,” with much feeling.

“Vell, I see Loodie, and if she bin sadisfied I got notings to say,” and he offered the young man his hand. Coranna did not think the pressure very hearty. He trusted Lutie, but he left feeling a little uncertain of her uncle.

“Vot you dinks vot dot Coranna,” inquired Van Straat upon Melton's re-entrance.



“Coranna is one of the finest men in Magnorum.”

“You really tinks dot?”

“I don’t think it. I know it.”

“I vish dot you say sometings differunt.”

“Why?”

“I no likes dot marriage.”

“Why?”

“Vy? Dots vat makes me mat; I don’t know vy.”

Lutie now entered and Melton thought the two would come to a better understanding alone, so he departed with a “Now you’re in for it, young lady,” into Lutie’s ear.

“Vell, you vas a nice leedle girl to go and get yourself engagedt py a man and not tell me notings about it.”

“How could I tell you, uncle? I haven’t had time. You didn’t say where you would be; I had to wait until you came around.”

“Oh dot vas de vay vash it? Now, vy you want to marry dot Coranna man? I take you mit und you marry mit ein tidle. Ven you got no tidle, tidles vas no goot aber ven you got a tidle day vas first-class. For fife hundert year dose Van Steiners life in dot town und eferpody like dose peoples. In America a man bin vunce rich, den poor. Ven you marry mit ein tidle dot family lasts longer. It vas nice ven Loodie vas always ‘my lady’ with a bow. I was older dan you vas, leedle girl.”



“ But, uncle, you see I love Mr. Coranna.”

“ Lofe ! vat is dot, Loodie ? ”

“ Well, I don’t know exactly,” returned Lutie, with a merry little laugh and a bright blush, “ but it makes me very happy.”

“ Ah, Loodie, you tinks dot you got to fall in lofe mit people before you got marrit to dem. Dot vas all shtuff. I vas the happiest marrit man vat efer lifed und dot vas de vay it comed apout. Mine mudder says to me, ‘ Hans, you vas getting purty oldt. It vas time you got marrit. You go py dem Shlecker girl.’ Dere vas seven von dem Shlecker girls. Dey vas goot girls. ‘ You gettin’ yourself marrit py dot shmallest Shlecker girl;’ und den I vent py dem girls und ven I came pack I say, ‘ Mudder, I vas in lofe mit dot biggest girl von dem Shleckers.’ My ! de vay dot voman’s schold. She say, ‘ Hans, you vun big fool, dot girl haf ein temper von der teufel. You gettin’ yourself marrit py dot shmallest Shlecker girl. You hearin’ me,’ und I say ‘ Yes, mudder.’ So I got marrit py dot shmallest vun. Dot vas the shveetest voman’s vat efer lifed,” and two tears came into the old man’s eyes.

“ I am so sorry, uncle,” murmured Lutie softly, laying her bright head against his sleeve.

“ You tinks dot you vont be happy mid out dot Coranna ? ” anxiously.

“ I am sure that I could never be happy without Mr. Coranna,” seriously.

“ Vell, I got notings to say, Loodie, ven you vas



happy dot vas all right, aber ven dot Coranna vas mean you comen py me und—”

“The idea of Mr. Coranna ever being mean, oh uncle!” How Lutie laughed at the bare suggestion!

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It was now the height of the season, and Mrs. Melton determined to give a reception, complimentary to Miss Van Straat. “There are people in Magnorum who have so much money that I can’t possibly outdo them, but I’m going to have it — ”

“So breathlessly exquisite that money will be nowhere,” put in Mr. Melton.

“Just so,” assented his wife. Mrs. Melton was still. There was no jar in the household machinery, but the lady’s face wore a rapt expression at times. For once she was inclined to be fussy about Lutie’s toilet. “You see if you were a brunette or had any other complexion, one would be limited, but with the world to choose from it is always so much harder to choose.”

But no matter how lengthy or weary the search, nothing can be found so exquisite as white, and Mrs. Melton finally conceded the fact. There was no denying that her guest had made a sensation and her friends were on the *qui vive* with interest. Lutie could not help noticing that her every movement was beginning to excite observation and



comment. Mr. Coranna called daily, but owing to the frequent demands upon their time it seemed as if they saw very little of each other. Coranna had been a reserved friend, but he made an eager lover. Pressing his suit with ardor he exerted himself in every way to entirely captivate his betrothed. Mr. and Mrs. Melton were satisfied, and if Mr. Van Straat was not, he kept entire silence. Mrs. Melton made vast preparations for her forthcoming reception. The day at length arrived. Lutie was still sleeping soundly when a message came, informing her that her uncle's plans had suddenly changed and he wished to see her at once. Descending, Lutie found him alone and very much agitated. He had received a cablegram informing him that his son had been accidentally hurt, and he had determined to leave America that very day. He had sent for Mr. Coranna, who soon arrived. Lutie must get ready to travel at once. "But it is not necessary that Lutie should go at all," declared Mrs. Melton, "She will only have to return. I will chaperon her until her marriage."

"I no leaf her mit dot engagement. I no like dose American engagement. Vun minute dey was on, de next dey was off. Ven she was marrit den I leafs her. Mit nothing else," sulkily declared Van Straat. "Ven she don get marrit to-day I take her mit."



“But it will hurry her so,” remarked Mrs. Melton while Lutie shrank like a sensitive plant.

“Nobody don got to marry dot girl,” declared the irascible old man, “I take her mit.”

“The marriage cannot take place too soon to suit me,” flashed Coranna, who had borne a good deal with patience.

“Oh no, no, no, not so soon,” murmured Lutie, excitedly.

Coranna crossed and stood near her, “Please consent to an immediate marriage, Lutie. It can be arranged to take place in a few hours. I would accompany you to Europe, but my mother could not stand the trip, and I am afraid to leave her, and Henri is gone too.”

“Now you will all please go away for a few minutes,” requested Mrs. Melton, for Lutie seemed bewildered.

“Oh, what shall I do, Mrs. Melton ; I don’t like to marry any one in such a hurry. I want a little more time. Do you think a gentleman can respect a lady who marries him so?”

“Now, Lutie, if it were any one else I should say, most emphatically, make him wait, but as long as it is Charlie Coranna, I will say that any lady could safely marry him at any time, and I advise you to marry him to-day and stay in Magnorum. You love him, and when lovers are once separated they sometimes never meet again.”



“That thought, oh, it is intolerable,” repeated Lutie earnestly.

Mrs. Melton opened the door. “You may come now, Charlie,” she called. Coranna came quickly, and Mrs. Melton withdrew. He was thrilled at thought of the immediate realization of his hopes, but Lutie’s pallor affected him strangely. In an instant he was at her side. “Don’t tremble so, little darling. Only be my wife to-day, and I promise you will never have cause to regret it. We can never be parted, Lutie. Darling, you could never be so cruel.”

Mr. Van Straat now entered the room. “Loodie, mein chilt, come mit your onkle. Vot you know von dot Coranna? Dere vas plenty more mans, come mit me.”

“But I love Mr. Coranna, uncle.”

“Den you will stay mit him?”

Lutie looked longingly at her uncle. Then she went up and put her arms around his neck and kissed him. “You have been very kind to me uncle, but—”

“Lutie!”

She turned and went straight to Coranna. “Oh dot vas de vay, vas it, vell I got notings to say. Dot marriage must come off in vun hour.”

“You will come with me, Mr. Van Straat. We shall be back in just sixty minutes,” Coranna called to Mrs. Melton with a laugh. He bent over Lutie a moment, but nobody heard what he said.



The next he had taken Van Straat's arm and the two left hastily.

"Lutie, you have just an hour to get into that white dress," Mrs. Melton reminded her. To Lutie it seemed like a dream. She stood quietly while they dressed her. How the moments sped! The gentlemen seemed scarcely to have had time to quit the house ere they were heard returning. Mr. Melton came up to get Lutie. Old Van Straat was completely overcome and could do nothing but stand with folded arms and bowed head. Lutie trembled more and more at every step she took toward the drawing-room. It was all that Melton could do to sustain her. In spite of his rush of joy Coranna winced. He felt that such haste was cruel. But after the brief ceremony constraint vanished. Mrs. Melton and Mr. Coranna's mother were equal to any emergency, and the hastily provided lunch proved quite enjoyable. Mr. Van Straat was obliged to depart almost immediately and Mrs. Melton could scarcely conceal her anxiety with regard to Lutie's toilet when she received his final caresses.

"What becomes of your reception to-night, Clara?" inquired Melton, "Miss Van Straat is no more."

"Now, Charlie Coranna, you needn't think you are going to cheat me out of Lutie this evening. I have invited the folks to meet her and meet her they shall."



“Oh, I could never stand it,” gasped Lutie.

“Now, you really must stay. We won’t say one word about the marriage. That will keep until to-morrow.”

“I think that will be the best plan,” remarked the elder Mrs. Coranna. “It would never do to disappoint Mrs. Melton’s guests. “You can leave on an early train.”

“Where do you go, Coranna?” inquired Melton.

“To the old home on the lake. I have telegraphed already.”

The evening wore on, and the ladies had merely a brief interval for rest ere the arrival of the guests. Lutie was tremulous with excitement. Her eyes shone, the color fluttered in her cheeks. The reception proved most brilliant. Radiantly she filled the senses and reigned in every heart and mind. To place her more at ease Coranna absented himself almost wholly. Estelle Leguay was present, ever fascinating, to-night, happy. She envied Lutie no triumph. Coranna did not linger at her side. Her brother Henry had arrived from the country and entered late. Mrs. Melton had insisted on their remaining after the departure of the other guests. When the last adieus had been spoken Mrs. Melton took Lutie’s hand and then Coranna’s and brought them forward. “You see I couldn’t let you go home to-night without knowing what all Magnorum must hear to-morrow. Our friend, Lutie, is Mrs. Coranna and this bachelor is a Bene-



dict. Is not it the best joke of the season?" Nobody paid particular heed to Leguay's expression or Estelle's pallor. It was all passed over in the laugh that followed. Estelle kissed Lutie, while Leguay hastened to congratulate his partner. "You see you just got back in the nick of time, Henri; I won't have to worry about business so much now," remarked Coranna carelessly.

Mrs. Melton was all unconscious of what her friends experienced, while Lutie retired to don her traveling dress. But they stayed bravely through the farewell speeches. At length the carriage door closed and the moon-light shone so clear that as they turned the corner, Leguay caught a glimpse of a bright head pillowed on a bosom that was to be its resting place through time.

On the way home Estelle held tightly to her brother, while he cursed at intervals like one bereft of reason. Leguay had pictured himself playing for the highest stakes in life with a full hand and the game was closed! "Fool that I was to think myself smart while my devoted partner got me out of town and had things his own way. But this don't end matters. He has got her. Let him keep her if he can."

"Are you going to quarrel with Coranna?"

"No, I am going to be his bosom friend, of course."

"Ugh, how I hate her," sneered Estelle. And Lutie, all unconscious of evil was speeding toward



that cosy country villa filled with warmth, and light, and fragrance in honor of a bonny bride.

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Mr. Melton had been at home for some weeks when he began to receive a startling number of telegrams. Mrs. Melton had observed but knew better than to inquire. However, a blunt question is not the only means of attaining information. "I have missed Lutie so much and if it hadn't been for having you with me I should have been really lonesome. I did not know that you would have been at home for this length of time, Frank. It is quite unprecedented."

"I am in no hurry," returned Melton with that indefinable expression in his eyes, which was the nearest approach to a show of emotion that he ever permitted himself. Truth to tell, something in his wife's reception of him had hurt him. He couldn't place it, but the wound rankled.

"I wonder when we shall have such another visitor as old Van Straat. So irresistibly funny," remarked Mrs. Melton with a laugh.

"He managed to keep us all in hot water the little time he was about. Coranna certainly spoiled his pet scheme of taking his niece to Europe and marrying her 'on a tidle.'"

"Tromp is in such a hurry to wed that he will scarcely give the girl time to get a dress made."



“Has he proposed to another already?”

“Yes, to Miss Lawrence. She knows nothing of his penchant for Lutie.”

“And never will. He was dreadfully miffed though. I never saw a man so angry, considering that he had nothing to be angry about. I sympathize with Tex. He will linger, perhaps not marry at all.”

“And Pinkie—”

“He’ll grow.”

They were at breakfast and Melton was thinking what a fortunate man he was and how exactly he was suited in his home. Every where his wife’s graceful taste was visible, in the appointments of the table, the arrangement of the furniture, the draping of the curtains, the placing of the flowers. There was something fairylike about it all. Clara was in high spirits and cheerfully telling her plans for the day. “Lutie will be back this evening and Charlie’s mother is to give a grand reception; I am so glad that you will be able to go,” she chattered on. “Another telegram for you, Frank. Here take it, I always had a superstitious horror of the things.”

Mr. Melton read it and set his teeth for an instant, but his manner did not change. “I shall have to leave at once, Clara,” very quietly. “Where is my photograph?”

She went to fetch it. “Here I am in a snow-storm. Anything for variety.”



Melton always carried a photograph of his wife. He expected her to have them taken while he was gone so that he could have a fresh one when he returned. He went so far as to keep an album where this one charming woman figured in every variety of pose and costume. Bidding her good-bye right merrily he started off.

“Clara will never know what that little stay cost me. I am just where I was three years ago. It’s a wonder I didn’t lose everything. That’s the last long visit I shall make to Magnorum until I retire.” And he adhered his resolution.

Mrs. Charlie Coranna returned to finish a brilliant season. Her husband’s mother had set about furnishing a convenient house of her own and leaving Lutie to reign alone, but the latter would not hear of it. The Corannas had been in the habit of entertaining often and well and they continued to do so. Leguay and Estelle were still on friendly terms with all the Coranna household and were treated by them with much courtesy. But Mrs. Melton continued to be Lutie’s intimate companion. The ladies might have been rivals had they not been such fast friends, but they shared honors without malice and were hand and glove, as the saying goes. Lutie found very little time for work, but she liked to embroider, and she was busy at this favorite task one morning when Mrs. Melton called to see her. A glance showed that that lady was in a petulant mood. Lutie received her in her private sitting



room, an apartment furnished precisely according to her own taste. It had been completed with what might have been termed a miniature garden in a bay window. But now, a pair of glass doors had superseded the graceful drapery and these were closed. Mrs. Melton tried them and found them locked. "Why, what is this Lutie? What have you done with all your flowers?"

Lutie laughed merrily and then blushed. "Oh, that's Charlie's room now, you see he decided to stay in the law business and now he's busier than ever and it seemed to me sometimes as if I hardly caught sight of him from one week's end to another, so I told him I thought I'd have to get a divorce."

"A divorce! Well, Lutie! Of all things! Imagine how Charlie must have looked!"

"Charlie opened his eyes very wide. He just said, 'Lutie, you *are* coming out?' Of course he knew I was only in fun; but the next day he came back home with a big satchel and said if we would give him a convenient part of the house he could stay with me part of the time; so I gave him my flower garden and he sits in there with all his books and papers and locks the door every time he goes out and he says if I touch one of them or let anybody clean up in there *he'll* get a divorce!!! Mother says she thinks I can manage a husband first rate if I am young."

Mrs. Melton's laugh ended in a sigh. "I don't believe Frank would do as much for me," she com-



mented rather bitterly, "he is always away, I don't see how he can care anything for me, I wonder why he ever married me."

"Oh, Mrs. Melton, how dreadful, and how unjust, when you know that Frank just idolizes you."

"You are a stout little champion, Lutie."

"I never saw a man so thoroughly wrapped up in anybody as Mr. Melton is in you."

"Almost always I feel sure of it, but then — come for a drive with me Lutie."

"You see when men are ambitious they have a great deal of work to do," continued Lutie when they were seated in Mrs. Melton's phaeton, "and don't you really think it is more manly than just dancing attendance upon us ladies?"

"You are a dear little friend, Lutie, and you know I would not talk so to any one else. But then you always have Charlie where you can see him."

"Quite a refreshing sight, the back of his head I mean, when he is sitting at his desk like an automaton."

"Do you know, Lutie, when I first met you at Barton I thought you had a lover, that you were engaged in fact. Who was that gentleman that accompanied you so constantly?"

"A Mr. Jones it — I suppose you mean," returned Lutie with some confusion

"Very good looking was he not?" continued Mrs. Melton.



“Yes, I am sure any one would call him so,” responded Lutie regaining her composure.

“Now, really wasn’t he a little of a lover?” teased Mrs. Melton. “Own up, Lutie. Its only me, you know.”

“No, honestly, he was not at all a lover. The only man I ever loved was Charlie. Do you know I loved him from the moment I laid my eyes upon him. Oh, if anything was to happen to him what should I do?”

“Why, Lutie, how foolish! What is going to happen?”

“Nothing, of course; I am quite foolish; but you know I loved my father so much and he died. My—I have an idea that every one I love is doomed to some misfortune.”

“What nonsense, child. I didn’t think you were so superstitious. You needn’t be afraid of Coranna’s dying. He’s healthy enough. Are you going to Mrs. Clinton’s ball to-night?”

“Yes, and so is Mr. Leguay; but Charlie and Estelle are not. Estelle has been to Mr. Leguay’s country place and is tired and Charlie will be busy, Mother will go. She is so kind. I won two prizes here in Magnorum, Clara. One a husband, the other a real true mother, I hate to say in-law.”

“They won the greatest prize when they got you,” returned Mrs. Melton warmly.

“Lutie would never tell me anything but the truth, I am sure,” Mrs. Melton was thinking on her



way home; “but the young gentleman did show her a great deal of attention, certainly. They were constantly together, I recollect them now sitting in a hammock, reading, driving together, and enjoying themselves generally. I have met somebody here in Magnorum that reminds me of him at times; but I can’t think when or where. Poor fellow, saw it was a hopeless case, I suppose, and then gave up. Lutie is very distant at times.”

Returning home very late that evening, long after the ladies had departed for the ball, Coranna seated himself at his desk in a rather abstracted mood. Recovering, he found himself gazing curiously at a square white envelope. It had been addressed with a type-writer and marked “private.” “Queer, but I always hated to open a letter that was marked ‘private,’ ” he muttered; “written with a caligraph too. Well it won’t be hard to read, that’s one blessing.” It wasn’t.—Mr. Coranna. If you want to avoid a scandal in your family, keep an eye on your wife. She passes some of time in the company of a handsome soldier, with whom I saw her to-day. This may not be my business, but I hate to see a man of your stamp the laughing stock of the city, as you must be in a short time if this is not stopped. If you want further proof, keep an eye on Lieutenant F.—A friend.

As Coranna read, he felt a chill in his veins, and his heart stood still. Then it leaped again, and he started up in a rage. The sound of wheels, and a



carriage stopped at the door. With a mighty effort, he controlled himself and sat down. Lutie, his wife, was coming. His resolution was formed in an instant. A woman like Lutie would never forgive having such a charge brought against her, if she were innocent, and—oh, God, she must be innocent. The blood filled his veins again, almost to bursting. In another instant, he felt that she was entering the room, but he did not turn toward her till she spoke. “Charlie, why didn’t you get to the ball at least part of the time?” He turned and gave her a hurried glance. Could ever woman have looked more royally beautiful? She wore diamonds with her purple velvet, and her face looked as pure as a saint’s with its aureole of golden hair. But at the sight, Coranna felt sick. He wished she would go away and leave him. Above all things, he desired to be alone. Lutie had no such intention, however. Coming across to him, she put her arms about his neck, “business, bother business,” pettishly putting aside the letters, “there is an end of it to-night.” Taking his chair by the top, she swung it around, and ere he was aware of her intention, had seated herself squarely on his lap. Laying her head upon his shoulder, she pressed her soft warm cheek against his face. “Oh, Charlie, dearest, I have something to tell you,” blushing brightly.

“What is it?” Coranna tried to stammer, but his tongue refused to move.



“I don’t believe I’ll tell you now,” she rattled on with a blush, “but I will — by and bye.”

“Yes,” he managed to say, but he was shocked at the sound of his own voice. He let her sit there as long as she would, because he was powerless to do otherwise. Mechanically he held her gently while she chattered about the ball. Coranna could not be rough, but he alone knew what torture it was. At times he seemed possessed of an irresistible impulse to fling her off. Lutie was utterly unsuspecting of any change, of course. She arose presently. “Oh, dear, I’m so tired. Now, Charlie, you don’t have to stay here any longer do you?”

“Yes, I must to-night — stay till I finish —” he jerked out.

“Well, I won’t bother you any longer then, good-night,” and kissing him playfully once and again she left the room. Coranna found writing an impossibility of course, but he sat at his desk for some time thinking. He re-read the letter. “The laughing stock of all Magnorum.” The words burnt into his soul. They roused the very devil within him. Starting up he vowed she would fool him no longer. Yet, ah! how winning she was! He could still feel the pressure of her arms around his neck, her kisses on his brow. But she was false — false. Who would dare write such a thing as this if the truth lay not behind it? He would take the letter to her. He would face her. He would accuse her. He would drive her from his home. Let



her seek shelter where she would! With his rage still upon him he stood up. A few steps brought him into full sight of the adjoining chamber. Then he paused. The sight within might well arrest harsh footsteps. By the low white bed his wife was kneeling. Her hair all unbraided fell about her in a golden shower mingling with folds of dainty white. A vision so exquisite in its beauty and purity Heaven alone might duplicate. Coranna stepped back softly. Great Heaven, do such women pray? There she knelt unconsciously proving her innocence. How blind he had been! Hadn't they always been jealous of Lutie and himself, of their love, their peace, their happiness? This was some vile attempt at slander. Why had he ever read it? He would tear it to shreds now as he would have been willing to annihilate its author could he but have discovered him. He resolved that he would never harbor another distrustful thought concerning this lovely girl whom he had married. Men might well envy him so perfect a wife! Returning to his desk he remained there far into the night. When he came into his wife's presence his heart was once more loyal and the experience of the few hours seemed nothing more than a hateful dream.

Coranna accompanied his wife on the following evening. Lutie wore a dress of maize-colored silk, Lieutenant Franklin wore his uniform. When Coranna was not with his wife Lieutenant Franklin was often in attendance, but no more frequently



than Leguay, whom Lutie disliked at heart but treated with careful civility. There was no denying that Lieutenant Franklin was a handsome man. He was as fair as a woman. His eyes were light brown and his hair very black. He was tall and heavy set and his eyes rested with a look of unmistakable pride and affection upon Lutie as they paraded about the rooms. Finally he led her to a retired corner of the conservatory and they settled themselves for a quiet chat, all unconscious that eager eyes were watching their every movement. Their conversation was evidently absorbing, for they failed to notice the form that had stolen into the shadow near them. "Do you think you are perfectly safe now?" asked Lutie looking sharply about her to see that no one was within hearing.

"No, I am never safe," returned the Lieutenant despondently, leaning his head upon his hand, "they are after me like bloodhounds, I am so contented here near you I will risk all danger."

"Oh, don't risk anything. It would be so terrible. Then there is my husband. Think of the disgrace, his name — ours, his proud old mother. Oh, dearest Carl, risk nothing. For my sake flee from danger."

"I must be ready then to go at any moment. When you receive a message from me you will come to me will you not, dearest Lutie?"

Leguay moved out of his corner. Others were arriving, he could wait to hear no more, but he had heard enough to make his eyes glitter with triumph.



Coranna had tried to put away all evil thoughts. Leguay could not tell from his manner whether he had received the mysterious epistle or not. But he determined to find out. In making a few remarks to Coranna about the ball he incidentally mentioned Lieutenant Franklin. Coranna flushed. It was all that Leguay required. "The poison is working," he sneered to himself, "but Charlie, you see, is a little too soft hearted to be rash." Henri Leguay was a busy man, but in spite of the many cares which his new estate brought him, in spite of the increasing business of the firm, he found time to keep an eye upon the movements of Mrs. Coranna, and in this he was aided by Estelle, who found time to be as idle as her brother was busy. Lutie seldom went out alone. She was a companionable little creature and usually invited some of her many friends to accompany her. Estelle's close watch was finally rewarded by seeing Lutie start for a drive all by herself. She was not long in following, feeling sure of obtaining some news for her brother. Lutie drove to Woodland Park. Estelle's heart beat when she saw her dismiss the driver with instructions and start for a walk alone. She went to a certain point in the shrubbery and sat down completely out of sight. Estelle soon found a spot from which she could command the situation. Lieutenant Franklin was not long in making his appearance. He sat down by Lutie and they remained in conversation for some time. "I don't know when



we can meet again like this," Lutie finally concluded as she arose. "It is never safe."

"No, but we must have a talk once more before I go. We must meet again to-night. Can you arrange it!"

"Let me see," said Lutie reflectively, "to-night I will be at Mrs. Renard's; are you invited?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the house thoroughly?"

"Yes."

"Well the southeastern corner of the conservatory is very dark, lover's corner, the girls call it. I will be there at twelve o'clock or as near that time as I can."

Estelle had heard all that she cared to know and hurried away to avoid observation. She told her brother of the interview, told him all she had heard and in a tone of disappointment. Before night fell Leguay knew just how affairs stood between Lieutenant Franklin and the wife of his friend and partner. Coranna found an unstamped note on his desk that evening. Nobody could tell how it got there. Another warning, "Watch your wife and Lieutenant Franklin." He tore it up and threw it aside contemptuously. "What an idiot whoever writes these things must be," he muttered. "Lutie is always to be found whenever I seek her and Lieutenant Franklin meets me with the frankest face in the world, seeks my society, in fact. When he isn't drilling, he's dancing, or playing



cards. I've watched him doing these things until I'm tired. Nothing will ever make me distrust Lutie again. Ah, here she comes! Was there ever so radiant a vision?"

Mrs. Coranna came trailing in in a dress of white satin. She walked demurely up and down in front of him. "You see I'm old now and married so I can wear brocade. What do you think of me?"

"I think you are the loveliest, dearest, sweetest wife that ever a man had," said Coranna folding her in his arms.

"There now, don't crush my dress," murmured Lutie demurely. "You can hug me just as well in a wrapper now, can't you, and then it won't cost so much. I'll tell you when I've got that kind of a dress on."

"You will have to, for I never notice the difference, you always look alike to me. Come, Lutie," he continued taking her by the hand and leading her to a sofa. "I want to ask you something."

"Now, what is it?" inquired Lutie, as she sat down and began fumbling with her bracelet.

"Are you right happy, Lutie?" anxiously.

"Yes, I am right happy," she echoed without enthusiasm. Yet a shadow flitted across her face.

"Lutie, since we have been married have you ever seen any one that you think you could be happier with than with me. Don't you sometimes regret your choice, my dearest,"



“I don’t know what you mean.” Lutie had risen and was staring at him with wide-opened eyes.

“Why, dearest, you are such a little sphinx. I sometimes think you merely let me bore you with my affection.”

“Oh, how mistaken you have been, how mistaken.” Lutie had forgotten all about her dress and was hanging about her husband’s neck with tears in her eyes. “Since the world began nobody has ever been loved as I love you. Why I just live for you, Charlie, and you only. I could die for you. Oh! Charlie —” and her voice died away to a whisper. “I have often trembled when I think of the way I feel about you. If anything should happen to you how could I live — how could I —” and she fairly sobbed.

“There, there, darling, what a fool I am to disturb you like this, and we must be off in a few moments. Now you musn’t cry, you can’t, you mustn’t!”

“I won’t,” said Lutie, dashing away the tears and smiling bravely. “But you mustn’t ever talk like that again, Charlie.”

“Indeed I shall not, dearest,” returned her husband. When Charlie entered the ball-room that evening it needed but a glance to assure Leguay that his shot had missed the mark. Coranna seemed so radiantly happy. Lutie looked a trifle pale and her mouth moved tremulously. He had never seen her



so dignified and quiet. She seemed determined not to attract attention to her movements. Leguay wisely guessed the reason Coranna had insisted on Lutie's dancing one waltz with him. At the close he found he was engaged to Estelle for the next dance and he hurried away to find her without noticing who was to dance with Lutie. When the quadrille was finished Estelle complained of the heat, "Let us take a stroll through the conservatory, I doubt it's being cooler, but —"

"Plants are always refreshing," murmured Estelle, who looked quite dashing in her crimson silk. Her face was flushed and her dark eyes blazed with suppressed excitement.

"You are getting prettier every day, Estelle," declared Coranna, who felt very kindly toward his partner's sister.

"What is the use of being pretty if one is not happy," pouted Estelle.

"You will never be happy so long as you remain single," protested Coranna with mock gravity. "Take one of those gentlemen you so delight in making miserable and make him happy and then you will be happy yourself."

"Is that your experience?"

"Mine has been one of the happiest. I did shrink from the matrimonial yoke, I confess," with a laugh, "but I have found it a yoke of roses. No weight and much fragrance."

Near by the chimes were sounding the hour of



twelve. Estelle had managed to direct their steps to that southeastern corner of the conservatory. Presently she gave a little cry and Coranna glanced to see what had attracted her attention. They had made a sharp turn; he raised a bough so that it might not strike Estelle and the light shone suddenly on his wife's golden hair and gleaming satin, and it also fell on Franklin's bright uniform and handsome face. The Lieutenant's arms were about Lutie as he clasped her in a close embrace, her face was hidden against his shoulder.

"Oh!" gasped Coranna, reeling a little. "Oh — My God — Oh!"

Estelle took his arm and clasped her hands about it.

"I — I can't think I swore to her innocence."

"Come away," whispered Estelle.

"Do you think I'll let him live?" trying to wrench himself from her grasp.

"Come away! come away!" pleaded Estelle, "it won't hurt her if you do kill him. Those kind of women never care. You can't kill her."

"No — I couldn't kill her. No, I couldn't do that, oh, no!" too dazed to more than echo his companion. Mind and will had deserted him.

"Charlie, come with me and let us go away together. I have always loved you, and it will be a fine revenge. I knew this all along. Just think what it was to me to love you as I always have and then to have this false girl come between us and



steal you from me. She boasts of how you could not live without her! Come with me. I will always be true to you."

Without another word Coranna suffered her to lead him away. Ten hours later they were out on the Atlantic sailing for Europe. Magnorum was agog with the news. Coranna, who had seemed to all but worship his wife, Coranna, the popular idol, the *chevalier sans reproche*, had eloped with his partner's sister! Lieutenant Franklin was nowhere to be found. But nobody placed any connection between these facts. Franklin bore a fine reputation and nobody had suspected Mrs. Coranna of being other than thoroughly devoted to her husband. It had been regarded as one of her most charming characteristics.

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Guest after guest departed from the ball and still Lutie's husband failed to present himself. She was beginning to feel embarrassed, when Henri Leguay came up to her: "I cannot find Estelle anywhere and I understand that she and Charlie left some hours since. Did they send any message to you?"

"None whatever."

"They must have been called away very suddenly. Estelle has taken our carriage. Will you permit me to escort you?"

"Something must have happened to mother, I am sure. Nothing else would have made Charlie act like this."



But upon arriving at home, she discovered that the elder Mrs. Coranna was sleeping soundly. Inquiry among the servants developed the fact that Mr. Coranna had returned home, done some packing, and driven away in Leguay's carriage. He had left no orders. Lutie at once sent to Leguay to learn what he had discovered concerning Estelle. The servant soon returned. Leguay was not at home, but the message would be delivered to him as soon as he appeared. Lutie paced the drawing-room tremulous with agitation. At length Leguay entered unannounced. "What is it? What is it?" Lutie inquired quickly, a feverish flush rising in her cheeks.

"My dear Mrs. Coranna," began Henri, coming forward and taking both her hands, "you must prepare yourself to receive some shocking news."

"Something has happened to Charlie, he is hurt — dead, I'm sure he is."

"No he is not dead or hurt. As far as we know he is alive and well — happy in fact. You will have to know, so I might as well tell you, Mrs. Coranna, your husband has eloped with my sister."

"Impossible!" Lutie tried to withdraw her hands.

"No, unfortunately there can be no mistake. They have gone away most openly, leaving for Europe on the Ocean Pearl. She was delayed and has not been out an hour. There was no attempt



at secrecy. They seemed to have paraded their attachment. You know they were always lovers.”

“Indeed!” with a flashing glance.

“My dear Mrs. Coranna do not distress yourself. Your husband was never worthy of you. He married you simply because he was jealous of me. He married you so that I could not. With a full knowledge of my love for you he hurried me off into the country and then married you before I had a chance to address you. Why should you grieve because of his perfidity? Estelle is my sister. They have disgraced us both. The papers will shortly be ringing with the affair. They are happy. Why should we not be? Let us follow their example, leave Magnorum at once and so avoid all things disagreeable. I am wealthier than Coranna now and I have always loved you.”

Leguay tried to embrace her. Lutie flung him off. “You are at the bottom of all this and you know it. I have always distrusted, now I hate you. If you were the only man living and there never was another to be created I would never marry you. Leave me — go —” and she pointed to the door.

“She will marry me yet,” determined Leguay. “In spite of this repulse she will marry me yet. She doesn’t dream that I know Lieutenant Franklin is accused of murder. When she becomes acquainted with that fact it will be an easy task to bring her to terms.”



Mrs. Coranna woke to the knowledge of her son's flight. When she went to Lutie she found her sitting still and white, bolt upright in the drawing room, attired as on the previous evening, though the sun was streaming in upon her. Very tenderly the old lady led her to her room, unclasped her jewels and helped her lay aside her gleaming satin. Lutie said never a word. She let herself be persuaded to lie down.

"She is stunned, poor little thing," thought Mrs. Coranna. Before the old lady left the room, Lutie put her arms around her neck. "I never had a chance to tell him mother, he never knew."

"Poor child, poor darling, that a son of mine should act thus!" Lutie made no fuss whatever and many doubted that she had ever cared for her husband. But her mother-in-law was wiser. "I will have to take her away from all these surroundings or she will die." So she sold her possessions in Magnorum and made preparations to leave the city for years of travel. They decided to elude Leguay and went away without leaving a message or address with any one. Ere they departed news was received that the Ocean Pearl had foundered with all on board.

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In a dilapidated apartment in Paris a man was sitting with his head bowed down in painful thought. Every now and then he sighed deeply. It was rain-



ing, and the room was growing dark and chill, but he made no effort to mend the meager fire nor did he seem to desire a light. He was lost in a profound revery and evidently oblivious of his surroundings. Presently a woman's shrill voice broke the silence. "Why on earth don't you keep a little fire up when I'm out and light a lamp; you might do that much at least. Here, Marie, you little chit," she continued and going over to a bed in one corner she roused a child and shook her violently, "why didn't you get up and get supper ready."

"Oh mamma, I'm so sleepy," begged the little one.

"Get up I say," she repeated, and seizing a whip she struck her bare shoulders and arms some sharp cuts.

"Oh papa, papa," screamed the child.

The man was at her side in an instant and had taken the little girl in his arms. "I say, Estelle, you shall not strike her; do what you please otherwise, that one thing you shall not do."

"I shall if I want to," retorted the woman sharply, "she is mine you know. You have no claim on her, none whatever." A flush stained his face but he made no reply. "You may get some supper the best way you can, then. I shall go out. You needn't fret, but that I shall find a supper," with a sneer. Walking over to the mirror she arranged her dress, which was gaudy and somewhat costly. It was not at all in keeping with the room nor its furniture.



Giving the man a contemptuous glance she rouged her cheeks in silence then marched out of the room frowning sullenly. With her a hateful presence vanished. The man undertook at once to soothe the little one while he dressed her. Then he went to the cupboard in search of food and finding none he placed the child on a chair and lighted a lamp. "Now you won't be frightened, pet, if papa leaves you for a little while ; I must go out and buy some supper for my baby."

"Papa, now, really," remonstrated the little girl shaking her finger. "I'm altogether too old to be called baby any longer, don't you 'member what I told you about that. If I don't cry when you are gone will you dance with me when you come back?"

"Dance!" smiling bitterly he swallowed a lump that had risen in his throat. What a mockery it seemed? "Yes, we will dance when I come back." Who could refuse her? Satisfied with the promise she sat down and folded her arms, remaining motionless during his brief absence. When he returned she ate heartily, her companion making a pretense at eating until she had finished, determined that there should be enough for one, if not for both. "Papa, what makes you so good?" said the little one climbing into his lap.

"Good!" with a start.

"Yes, good and sweet and kind," she continued, stroking his face with her baby fingers,



“ you don’t whip me and scold me like mamma does ; I hate mamma.”

“ Hush, pet, hush,—”

“ I will, papa, I won’t be bad, I’ll try to love mamma, but then you never can,” coolly.

“ You see when you are away she whips me, and she says I don’t belong to you, that I’m all hers and that she can do what she pleases with me, and she stamps her foot so,” and the child got down to show him, then catching both his hands she looked into his face. “ Now, papa, I want you to tell me ; ain’t I really your little girl, as much as mamma’s ?”

“ Indeed you are really my own precious little daughter, don’t listen to them, when they talk to you like that, my pet.”

“ And mamma said, you won’t let on if I tell you,” lowering her voice to a whisper. “ Mamma said she was tired of you. Just think of it, tired of you, my nice sweet papa, and she said she was going away with a great rich man and take me with her, and she would have diamonds and he would give me more candy in one day than you could buy in a whole year.”

“ Well, that’s news,” he muttered, with a start. “ But I wouldn’t leave you, papa, no, not even for candy ; but I do like candy,” with a sigh. “ I do like it a very great deal.”

“ You shall never leave papa, my pet, as long as he lives.”



“I guessed you'd say that, can't I guess good though? Now let's dance.”

So the rickety furniture was moved back, the curtain drawn, and the light turned up. The little girl danced alone at first, and papa stood watching. Then she held out her tiny hands and he caught them and around and around they went, waltz, schottische, galop, making up a dance of all manner of steps and figures. When they tired of dancing, they tried a game of catch and chased each other about the room. They had just ended such a frolic and started to waltz again when they heard a knock at the door. It was ajar and they became conscious that a woman had been standing on the threshold watching them. Finding that she had been preceived she entered. She was an old lady, tall and stately. Her gray hair curved on either side of a stern looking face and her dress of black velvet, with its collar of choice lace betokened the aristocrat. “What are you doing here,” she demanded looking grimly into the man's face. “Mother,” he gasped gazing blankly, “Oh, my God, how did you get to such a place as this.”

“Rather how did you get to such a place as this? I saw you on the street and followed you here. I knew you at once, though I thought you were dead long since — drowned. Why have you never undeceived me?”

“It was best that you should think so.”



“ Yes, but it seems that I was not to have that satisfaction. Where is — that girl? ”

“ Estelle? She lives with me, but she is not at home now. ”

“ Where is she; do you permit her to roam about the streets at night? ”

“ She does as she pleases. ”

“ Whose child is that? ” pointing to Marie.

“ She is my daughter. ”

“ Are you sure? ”

“ Oh, quite sure; Estelle would not look at any one else as long as the money lasted. ”

“ Then you never married her? ”

“ I have often wished to do so — she refuses. ”

“ You have done a fine thing, have you not, my son? My patient toil of years to make you all it might become a man to be has come to a grand end. The woman for whose sake you sacrificed what promised to be a great career refuses to marry you! ”

“ Mother, enough! you are going too far; I wish to live for the child's sake. Reproach me no further. Go away; I ask nothing at your hands. God knows I have suffered; my hours are full of agony without these words from you. Why drive me to utter despair? The little girl must have protection. That alone has prevented my ending a life that has become a mere mockery. ”

“ Whatever you do, don't thrust yourself into the presence of the Lord unsummoned, ” warned



the old lady, adopting a milder tone. "Why are you living in such poverty?"

"I don't know; I have lost hope, courage, the ability to make money."

"But the fortune that your father left you is still intact?"

"I could not obtain that without — without — I did not wish you to know that I still lived."

"What are you going to do with her? Let her follow in her mother's footsteps?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"So say I. Leave this woman, take your child and come and stay with me; I will introduce you as my nephew, cousin, friend."

"Impossible! That I may never be called to look upon the faces of those who were about me in that former happy time, is my earnest wish. Much as I love you, mother, it would have been better if we had not met to-day. It is almost more than I can bear."

The old lady had softened now to tears.

"Don't cry, mother; the past can never be undone; but if it will ease your heart to know, I will assure you that for the future you need have no fear. Heretofore I have drifted caring for nothing, letting Estelle manage as she would; but now I shall take my life into my own hands once more. This woman has planned to leave me; I will leave her instead. I will go to another city and enter upon a new career. Henceforth I will lead an hon-



orable life for the sake of my child, and that you may be at peace.”

“I will do all in my power to aid you, rest assured. Here is all the money I have with me at present,” laying a purse upon the table. “Your fortune has increased and I will see that it comes into your possession. When will Estelle return?”

“She may be here at any moment. I must keep my intention a secret or she will make trouble about Marie, and I am bound to have her.”

She gave the girl a cold glance. “Then I will not stay longer. Here is my address. I could not trust myself to look upon her,” and shaking her head sorrowfully she turned and went away.

“Mother what has become of — what has become of —” hoarsely, trying to pronounce a name but his lips failed to form the sounds. When he looked up she was gone. Marie had climbed upon his lap and was putting a purse into his pocket. “Is that your mamma, papa; I didn’t think you ever had any mamma?”

“Every man has a mother, child.”

“I don’t like her. She stolded you like mamma does, only worser. I won’t stold you, I love you.”

Yes and he remembered with a pang that he must be stirring or else he might lose her. If Estelle returned and insisted upon claiming her he might plead in vain. So he hastily set about arranging for departure. Wrapping the little girl in an old coat he carried her to the depot and left the city.



The landlord found his rooms abandoned. Estelle did not return. She had met a rich American and sailed for other shores.

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Coranna had gone to Florence, secured a quiet though elegant residence and adopted the name Adamari. He had busied himself writing an opera, and to his own surprise it had proved a success. This, together with his fine manners and distinguished appearance, had won him the favor of the people of that city. Among the many invitations showered upon him he had at length accepted that of Prince Forese Donati, who owned a villa near Florence. The prince, a fine old gentleman, was exerting himself to make the time pass agreeably. Repeatedly he regretted the absence of the princess who had been called away the evening previous to Coranna's arrival, by the illness of a friend at some distance. Coranna could not but notice how keenly her absence was felt in every way by her husband, who had grown into the habit of depending upon her to relieve the hours of all tedium for himself and for his visitors. Coranna was beginning to find even the exquisite beauty about him monotonous, and was glad when one morning his servant announced that the princess had returned late on the previous evening, accompanied by both her sons.



He had risen early, thinking to take a stroll in the garden with his little daughter. The prince had also arisen. "You will find my boys in the garden," he said, "they are up with the sun."

"Come, pet, we will go and see if we can't find you some little companions." A short walk brought them to the side of a miniature lake upon the bank of which the boys were seated. The elder was absorbed in practicing a tune upon his flute, the younger amusing himself meanwhile by throwing pebbles into the lake.

"Good morning, Cino," said Coranna, addressing the would-be musician. "You see your father has made me acquainted with you during your absence, and now can you tell me who I am."

"You mistake me for the Prince," answered the boy, rising gracefully and grasping the proffered hand. "Indeed I know who you are, sir. You are Signor Adamari. I have a photograph of you in my room, and I am always trying to get those pretty tunes in your last opera."

"So I have perceived," returned Coranna, looking full into the boy's thoughtful face. Then he gasped with that strangling sensation that he felt at times. What affected him so queerly? Of whom did this Prince's son remind him? Slowly he drew his hand across his forehead trying to think. Slowly his thoughts traveled back to the home of his childhood. Yes, that was where he had seen that face. A famous Italian artist had painted a picture



of Coranna in his boyhood. This boy was the image of that picture.

“I’m glad that you recognize the tune, Signor. I was afraid that nobody would be able to.”

“Not so bad as that, Cino, not so bad. This is my little daughter, Marie. You can run and play now, pet, and I will help Cino to perfect this tune on his flute.”

“Let me take her to my brother. He will be glad of such a dear little girl to play with.” At this juncture the younger boy came forward.

“Now for our music. This is the way, see — Now try — ah that is better. You will make a musician, Cino, never fear.”

“I see you still mistake me for the Prince.”

“Mistake you, surely you are the elder!”

“Yes, I am my mother’s elder son, but the Prince is only my stepfather. Didn’t he tell you?”

“No, he spoke of you with equal affection as his sons.”

“Oh, yes, he loves us both the same. When I was small I didn’t know but that he was my own father; but they were obliged to tell me, you know, to keep me from being disappointed about the title and so forth.”

“You speak of all this wealth very lightly. You don’t envy your brother, then.”

“Envy Cino! No; I love him. We would have a dull time without Cino. He keeps us all alive, I can tell you.”



“Then you don’t remember your father at all.”

“No, he died some months before I was born. He was drowned. Mamma says I am the image of him, but not so gay or quite so good looking. The Prince is a kind father; he makes no difference between us. In fact, sometimes he gets out of patience with Cino, but he never scolds me. Then he will not let me be called by my own father’s name, I take his. Mamma says that she hopes I will be as smart as my own father was. He knew a great deal about business and law and music. I don’t care for anything but music. I would rather people should say, ‘There is Carlo Coranno, the composer,’ than, ‘There is his highness, Prince Donati, though a great many others think differently.’”

“Say what?” gasped Coranno with a great start, “what name did you say?”

“Oh, yes, of course,” laughed the boy, “you don’t recognize my real name; but I’ll take it if ever I get famous. You may be sure I will. There is plenty of it and a nice mixture — Carlo Van Straat Coranna.”

Coranna sat stunned. “What was your mother’s name before she married?” he demanded hoarsely.

“Mrs. Lutie Coranna. Why, I believe you are ill, Signor. Are you always so white?”

“I am never exactly well, but it is nothing,” said Coranna. “I was quite interested in what you were saying. How old are you?”



“I will be fourteen very soon.” A little more than that time had elapsed since he had left New York. This then was his son. His features alone told the story. And the Princess? She must be his former wife. This youth, at once so interesting and so gentle, was his own son, of whose existence he had not even dreamt. And now he must be prepared to face the Princess, his former wife. There was no possibility of escape. Carlo chattered gaily on until the servant came to inform them that breakfast would be served. Carlo accompanied Coranna and Cino walked behind demurely leading the little Marie. The Prince drew his wife’s attention to their approach. “Here are Signor Adamari and his little daughter. In him you will find a sincere friend, my dearest. He will accept no invitation unless this little one accompanies him. She is never allowed to be far out of his sight, even with a servant. There is some reason for it, of course. Though he says nothing of his past history, I feel that he must have suffered much. See, Carlo has charmed him already. He has been giving him some instruction on the flute.”

“Quite charming of so great a composer. Love my boys and I will love you,” laughed his wife, and it was with the sweetest of smiles that she turned to welcome Coranna when he was presented to her. Anyhow the Princess had the sweetest manner in the world. Any brusqueness she had owned to as a girl had disappeared, leaving a polish



that was an added marvel to her beauty. Coranna had idolized the girlish countenance. She was now in her prime and a mother. At sight of her he realized his unutterable weight of woe. A shadow as of death oppressed him. "I was so sorry to be obliged to leave when I found that you were coming to see us, Signor, but my friend's life was despaired of."

"How is your friend now?" Coranna found breath to inquire.

"Oh, better; much better; else I could not have left her. But I am glad to be at home again. We will try to make up for lost time. Are you fond of gayety, Signor?"

"I once was fond of gayety."

"When you get into the whirl again your fancy for it will return, we hope. I used to think that children were always gay, but Carlo here is often melancholy; always fond of playing sad music."

"He will make a musician, madam?"

"Ah! I am so glad. Come, we will go to breakfast," she continued, laying her hand lightly on Coranna's coat sleeve. A wild impulse came over him to fling it off, to make himself known, to crush her, to kill her. And yet he mechanically performed the usual duties of a guest, such is the force of habit. He was glad when the meal enforced a period of comparative quiet. Afterwards the party adjourned to the garden. The Princess was wild over Marie.



“ Oh, if I had but a little daughter like this,” she would say, putting her arms about the child, “ I should be so very happy.”

Coranna took note of everything. He saw how Carlo was idolized — his son. The boy was ever at his mother's side. How different from the mercurial little prince ! Coranna stayed on ; fearful as his position was it fascinated him. Sometimes he thought he was going mad. When his son would throw his arm across the prince's shoulder and call him father and beg his permission to do this or that, when he watched this man shower gifts upon the boy and advised him with tenderest solicitude ! Then unwittingly the children seemed to torture him. Marie had noticed the princess embroidering and the latter had made a merry compact with him. “ While you are teaching my son music I am going to return the compliment by teaching your daughter to embroider,” she had said. So he was often obliged to watch while she placed the wee fingers in position and kissed the little one's tears away when she pricked them in her awkward attempts at needle work.

“ Your wife is dead ?” the princess once remarked interrogatively when they had been discussing Marie and her education.

“ My wife was false to me,” Coranna answered gloomily, noting sharply the effect of his words.

“ Ah, how sad that such things should be,” sighed the princess plaintively.



“She would deceive Lucifer! Truly she is a pattern of innocence herself,” was his sneering thought. Meanwhile Carlo and the composer were almost inseparable companions. Coranna had found no society so charming as that of this youth with his noble impulses and high ideals. One evening the two were sitting at some little distance from the house, practicing upon their favorite instrument, the flute. They were in full view of the piazza upon which were seated the prince and princess, each with a child beside them, Cino and Marie. A gentleman came riding up the road that led to the house. The horse was coming towards them and the sun shone full on his face. Coranna at once recognized Lieutenant Franklin, older, stouter, but otherwise little changed. Alighting he walked up to the princess with an easy air of gallantry and kissed her. “Who is that, Carlo?” demanded Coranna grasping the boy’s arm.

“That’s my uncle, Mr. Van Straat; he has been away ever so long traveling all around the world. Mamma thought he was dead for a long time; but he was in Africa and now he’s come back safe and sound. You ought to have seen how happy she was. I must go and see him. Will you excuse me or come along?”

“Certainly no — not now,” murmured Coranna. As soon as Carlo’s back was turned he hurried to his own apartments by another entrance. Hour after hour he rushed up and down tearing his hair,



writhing in agony, muttering to himself: "Innocent after all, innocent, innocent." It was an awful night for Coranna. His brain was on fire. For the first time in the whole fifteen years he realized the full import of his action. His mind wandered back to Lutie as he had left her. Again he felt the soft cheek pressed against his and remembered her words concerning the little secret that had never been told. What must she not have suffered! And it was like her to attain, conquer it bravely and attain cheerfulness. It had not taken him long to discover that her feeling for her husband was affection, respect, tenderness. There was no pretense to the exuberant happiness of their own union. The past could not be recalled, but what was to be his future, theirs? Should he obey the impulse to make himself known, to take his wife to his heart once more and claim his son! But what would be her feeling in the case? Only horror. This he perceived. She was more than contented as things were. To make himself known would destroy the happiness of all. The prince would be wretched. It would perhaps involve the prospects of the little Cino. Lutie herself would be miserable. Now that her innocence was proved he remembered her tender conscience with regard to such matters. She would persist in remaining away from both. What contempt he would note in the eyes of his son when the tale was told! How, suspecting an innocent wife, he had eloped with what afterwards proved to be a vile woman.



Whatever explanation he could make now seemed trivial, idiotic. Lutie's silence with regard to her brother had savored of deception, of course, but no doubt she would eventually have told him all about it. No; things must remain as they were. He could not stay here another day. Complete self-renunciation was his only course. Having ruthlessly crushed the blossoms of life, the fruit was not for his picking. The world should know no further wretchedness on his account, he determined. Already he had added well to his share. "Hereafter I must bear it all alone, in the knowledge that she is happy, that I am wholly to blame. My son calls a worthier man father. What an awful fate is mine!" The gloom of life had settled heavily upon Coranna. Morning found him still sitting with bowed head and wide open eyes. He knew the day was to be a terrible one for him. But he determined upon composure. Rising, he completed his toilet and sat down at the window hoping that the fresh air would steady his nerves. As he sat watching he noticed the figure of a man stealing through the shrubbery. His evident desire to remain concealed attracted Coranna's attention and then following him with his eyes he saw that he stopped directly opposite the piazza which the family usually occupied during the morning. The next thing he discerned was the gleam of a weapon, and waiting no longer he jumped from the window, started in the direction of the intruder and came



within a few feet of the man, when the latter perceived him. Too late! A shot rang out in the morning air and the next moment he was grappling in a hand-to-hand conflict with the assassin. They struggled. Coranna succeeded in throwing aside the weapon and forced his antagonist backward. They had reached the edge of the lake when Coranna slipped, falling heavily to one side. He dragged his opponent with him part way, but, in striking the water became confused and relaxed his grasp. The next moment the cool waters of the lake had closed over him. Some gardeners who had witnessed the scene now came forward and offered their assistance; but Coranna calling to them to continue the pursuit came quickly to the shore and hurried to the house. Here the wildest confusion prevailed. The prince had been shot and was mortally wounded. Though dying he was conscious and calm. His wife held his hand. The distracted children hung around his bed. Van Straat had hurried away to call a surgeon. The prince recognized Coranna at once. "You tried to save me, I saw it all," he said softly. "Lutie, dearest, my children, God is great and good. He alone knows why this has happened. All is meant in love and I cannot stay with you. You will come to me."

Coranna breathed in great gasps. The peace of the dying man seemed to mock the turmoil in his own soul. Soon the priest arrived to administer extreme unction. Before noon all was over. The



princess and her children retired to their own apartments. Coranna offered to assist Van Straat in the many duties that necessarily fell upon him. His aid was gladly accepted and the men went about together like brothers. When his host had been laid to rest, Coranna determined to depart. So taking his little daughter, Marie, he arranged his affairs at Florence and set sail from Europe.

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Lutie had always blamed herself for having allowed her friendship with Mrs. Melton to be broken off. But her mother-in-law had insisted on severing all connection with their friends in Magnorum at the time of their departure for the old world, and Lutie was obliged to own her wisdom. They had gone to a villa in Italy which her husband's father had retained and sometimes visited. Here they were well received, and upon emerging from their retirement found pleasant society at their very doors. Lutie's thoughts often reverted longingly to Mrs. Melton, but her mother frequently declared that she did not wish to hear a word from Magnorum, and after her marriage she found it doubly embarrassing to recall a friend who was so well acquainted with her life history when to those around her, save the prince, it was totally unknown. Lutie had told him all. "Life is full of such things," he had quietly re-



joined. "You must learn to forget. I will try to make you happy, and I assure you that I will not elope. I have seen the ladies of three continents and I find you the most charming of them all." And if not wildly happy Lutie had been very contented.

But Mrs. Melton had lost a friend and felt that she had every right to be extremely huffy about it. "To think of Lutie's going off and leaving me without a word," she was wont to remark with tears in her eyes. Mr. Melton would laugh, Leguay would have nothing to say in the matter. He now devoted himself to Mrs. Melton exclusively, but so adroitly as to never seem intrusive. Having determined to permit nothing to interfere with his moneyed interests Mr. Melton's absences became more and more frequent and prolonged. There was no denying Mrs. Melton's beauty, grace, or talent, and when private theatricals were agreed upon she was frequently chosen for leading roles. Spurred on by success she devoted more and more time to *affaires dramatique*. She was assisted in her studies by Henri Leguay, who continually lamented that so bright a creature was already hampered by matrimony. All agreed that if Mrs. Melton were a single woman and poor she could have taken to the boards and found a brilliant and congenial career. As for Mrs. Melton herself she failed to see why she should find any obstacle in her wealth, which was not great, or in a husband who came home at long intervals.



So on one of these latter occasions she briefly informed him that she had resolved to go upon the stage. Mr. Melton regarded her with amazement. "Why, Clara, what freak is this? Can't you find plenty of acting to do here in Magnorum? Are you dissatisfied in any way?"

"No, it isn't that; but other men and women have found fame agreeable. Why should not I?"

"What do you propose to do with me, Clara?"

"Why, what do other actresses do with their husbands?"

"Divorce 'em," answered Melton briefly.

"I don't propose to be one of that sort," returned Mrs. Melton pursing up her lips.

"Clara, I don't think you would like the professional stage. There is a great deal of hard work about it, slights, inconvenience, gossip, adverse criticism. I should think you would find it much more agreeable to remain here at home and not bother your head about such things."

"*I think I should prefer to travel; I like action.*"

Melton crossed over to where his wife was sitting and put his arms about her.

"Come now, Clara, give it up?"

"No, I won't give it up," stormed Mrs. Melton, "Everybody says I have talent, and why are we given talent if we are not to use it? Do you think it is the proper thing for everybody to hide their light under a bushel? If I was meant just to stay here like this, why should I have any ambition?"



“I don’t understand these things myself,” returned Melton slowly. “I daresay you are right. Are you quite decided as to your course?”

“Quite. I am to make my debut during the coming season.”

Melton shivered a little. “I don’t think I shall be able to assist you much in this enterprise, Clara. This business is not in my line.”

“Burrell has offered to manage me.”

“Well, that settles it, I suppose?”

“Yes, don’t worry about it at all, Frank; Henri will attend to everything. He is to be one of the company?”

So the subject was dismissed from their conversation, but not from Melton’s mind, and he left home feeling thoroughly miserable. Mrs. Melton persevered with her plans. Her debut made a sensation and her first tour was likened to a triumphal progress. All were surprised that Mr. Melton took it so quietly. Certainly he did not seem enthusiastic, nor could it be said that he disapproved. He joined his wife as frequently as possible and quietly awaited the time when she should weary of public life. Meanwhile he kept a sharp eye to business and in fancy saw Clara “queening it” in full possession of the boundless wealth which he would be able to command. Formerly in his travels he had found little that reminded him of his wife’s dainty personality; but now her features met his at every turn. They stared at him from the fences, they



peeped from behind jars in the drug stores, the photographer's windows were ablaze with them, he unrolled them with his cigarettes, and his morning newspaper rejoiced in a caricature which he vowed the editor's wife had sat for. Melton had resolved neither to grumble nor discourage, but he would not feign interest in his wife's theatrical career. He felt none. He had never cared to see her act and Clara always said it would embarrass her to have him of the audience. But upon arriving at a western city he found that his wife was billed for a week's engagement at its largest theater. He had come upon her unexpectedly, having arranged to meet her further on. They had supped at the same hotel ere he was aware of her presence in the city. He then resolved to take a view of her before the foot-lights and sauntered to the theater, passing a five dollar bill to a speculator on the way for a choice seat. Nobody recognized him and he walked quietly to his place as the curtain rose. He could not but own to a thrill of delight when Clara entered as Juliet, and recognized that there was a certain sort of music in the storm of applause that followed. The whole performance was thoroughly charming. Watching, it took him back to the days when Clara had played the part without acting. Leguay as Romeo was not overpleasing; but he did not mar the effect and left the audience free to bestow their entire attention upon Mrs. Melton. She was frequently called before the cur-



tain and Leguay handed her about in great style and with an air of possession that would have nettled Melton if he had not been so thoroughly accustomed to him. As soon as the play closed he hurried to find Clara, who was feeling somewhat homesick and greeted him with astonished delight. "I had no idea you were such a brilliant little star, Clara," he declared giving her a squeeze that made Romeo's embraces seem timid. "It's a great thing to see one's wife these days. I had to pay five dollars for the privilege."

Mrs. Melton laughed. "Oh, that's the speculators, mean things. They got nearly all the tickets at E—and the people wouldn't buy 'em, I had to play to empty seats. I wish they were somewhere. But I am so glad you like my acting, Frank; I always thought you would make fun of it, and so dreaded to have you see me."

"Not at all, Clara; I honestly think you did right well."

Mr. Melton's commendation put his wife into a very gracious mood. He accompanied her for quite a while and as an old Englishman put it, "There was Romeo and Juliet hon hand hoff the stage."

But there was one dissatisfied person in that company. That was Leguay. He had determined upon a pursuit of Mrs. Melton that was as cruel as it was senseless. He was not even in love with her, but there were so few cases in which he found



pursuit a necessity, and the winning of Mrs. Melton was difficult, nay, he sometimes feared impossible. Once on the stage he had thought that the coast would be clear, never doubting that her husband would be seriously displeased and their separation a certainty. Melton's continued care and devotion annoyed him. Leguay did not like acting "on the stage" and became more and more disgusted with his part. At length he became so careless that the manager was completely out of patience. Leguay assured him that in his case the part was a mere matter of amusement and an actor was selected for the part. This left Leguay no excuse for lingering with the company; but he continued to follow Mrs. Melton and spend every possible moment in her society. This proceeding made an immediate stir. Mr. Melton had heard of his wife's change of support and approved it. "I did not think Henri's theatrical craze would last," he remarked; "he has very little talent and in some parts made quite a fool of himself, I thought."

"Romeo is generally supposed to make a fool of himself, I believe," curtly.

"Yes, but it has to be done artistically, don't you know?"

"I think he did right well, and his services have been invaluable in getting me well started; I never had a better friend."

"I own that, Clara, but friendship has its limits, and now, that Leguay has no place in your com-



pany, I shall expect his close attendance to cease. Why should a man of his fortune follow your troupe about the country? It is your society that he seeks, and that alone."

"We were always companions, have the same tastes, are interested in the same subjects. Henri has been disappointed in love. He don't say so, but I know it. I feel it. He prizes my friendship, and I value his."

"But the world does not understand this friendship."

"Bother the world. It does not understand anything. What is the world to me? It is full of lies and I shall not regard it."

"I say you shall regard it, Clara, and you must, for my sake. To a certain extent, you have lost position by going upon the stage at all, but I don't care so much for that, as I regard those mostly as fools who think so. But you may as well understand, that I shall never permit a scandal to grow up around my wife."

"You can't be with me yourself, and the people around me are not congenial. I must have somebody that I can talk to."

"That somebody must not be Leguay. Let him go off and get married. That's what he ought to have done long ago."

Mrs Melton pouted, but made no answer, and her husband did not again refer to the subject. After he was gone, Mrs. Melton seriously consid-



ered following his advice, and forbidding Leguay to continue his visits, but she put the matter off from time to time, realizing that the parting would be a serious business. Mr. Melton, watching from afar, discovered no change in the aspect of affairs. The magnificent house which he had started in Magnorum was completed, but his wife was at the other side of the world; he took possession of it alone. Its servants are men, and as yet no woman has crossed its threshold. Leguay finally parted from Mrs. Melton and went in search of revenge upon Lutie. Was it satiety or despair? The matter can never be made clear. She is still on the stage, prosperous and admired. As to Frank, no word has passed between them since the failure of his counsel. Mr. Melton's friends have urged him to some definite action, but he will have nothing to say upon the subject. Much he wonders if forgiveness is ever a crime. Friends may advise, but very well he knows that he could never find it in his heart to oppose Clara, if she volunteers to return there, as the mistress of the mansion that was built for her alone.

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Coranna came directly to Magnorum. Events had crowded to such an extent that he feared for his reason. Magnorum agreed with him. The scenes, fresh yet familiar, soothed him. He began



to feel more and more natural, more like the Coranna of old. It occurred to him to inquire about his old partner, Leguay. Wealth had been his ruin. He had entered upon a career of vice that had made his name a by-word in the city. Having squandered all his money, he was now poor. But for all that was said against him some of the old friendly feeling still stirred Coranna's heart and he continued his search. At length he found Henri in the attic of a tenement, wretchedly ill, unconscious, too bad to be moved, the doctor said. Coranna immediately constituted himself nurse and surrounded the invalid with what comfort was possible. When Leguay became conscious he made himself known to him. "So you hunted me up and nursed me did you? If you knew all that you owed me you would have let me die in the gutter and given me a parting kick."

"How is that, Henri."

"Charlie, old boy, I've wronged you. If it was anybody else, I'd die silent; but if there is anything I can undo, for God's sake give me the chance. It is quite a story, I sent you letters about your wife and Lieutenant Franklin. He was her brother. I didn't tell you that, but I knew it. I thought you would find them kissing each other and I suppose you did. Estelle wanted to marry you herself and I intended to marry Lutie. But you were so quick. You didn't give us a chance. She wouldn't have married me anyhow; I asked her after you left. She treated me as if I had been a dog — threw me



off. I swore revenge, but your mother was as quick as yourself. She left Magnorum quietly. They traveled Europe. I lost the clue for a long time but found it again and followed it up. I had sworn that she should be wretched. I found her happily married, and to a Prince. I swore he shouldn't have her. She would not have me for her husband. She should have none. I shot him."

"You shot him!"

"Yes, I shot him. Some one fought me, but I escaped. I then intended to follow up my revenge and have her brother arrested, but I had no time. She never told you that she had a brother, did she?"

"No."

"He had been arrested, charged with murder and had escaped. He was continually disguising and hiding. He had quarreled with his room-mate at college and had thrown him into the river. It was known that the fellow could not swim and his body was never afterwards found. The man is alive; I have his address. Here it is," he continued, handing him a card. "Van Straat would know him any day. Disliking his guardian he took the opportunity to slip off to sea, never dreaming of the consequences. You won't kill me, Charlie," he begged, glancing at Coranna's darkening countenance. "I won't live long, I've suffered, too."

"You are safe as far as I am concerned. What can undo the past?" Coranna gloomily retorted.

"How did you get rid of Estelle? She is here



in Magnorum living in grand style. I saw her in her fine carriage one day and followed her home. I loved Estelle. I would have done anything for her always. I got into her house and told her who I was. I showed her the marks on my arm that I had tattooed to please her when we were children. I was hungry. Charlie, you don't know how hard it is to be hungry, when you are not used to it. I told her I was, and she laughed! She said I had got beyond the pale of respectability and she couldn't afford to have me around. If she helped me once or claimed me I would always be poking about. She ordered the servant to put me into the street. He did; he threw me out. She is very particular now, you know, Charlie, is married, goes to church and all. I will send her to one of the places her church preaches about when I get well enough."

"Here, don't talk like that. You are dying yourself, Henri, You have caused me untold misery, and I was always your friend. For my part I forgive you. Try to ask forgiveness of Him above and die in peace. I will leave you now, but only for a short time. Shall I get some one to stay with you?"

"No, I would rather be alone. But you will give me a little money, Charlie, won't you? just a little; I hate so to be without money."

Coranna handed him a bill in silence, thinking his request merely one of the vagaries of a sick person, never dreaming that he was strong enough



to get out of the room. No sooner had Coranna left than Leguay arose and put on his coat and hat. Going out into the street he purchased a revolver and dragged himself to Estelle's new home. For hours he watched in the shadow of the steps beside the entrance. Her carriage drove up at last, and she alighted, gay with satin, lace and jewels, her husband, a handsome man, accompanying her. But the gay words were frozen on her lips. Henri's bullet pierced to the heart. To place the pistol at his own head and fire was the work of an instant. They perished together. Coranna hearing of the occurrence now sickened of Magnorum. Wherever he turned he was confronted by murder. The air seemed full of it. In some way he felt partially responsible for the tragic turn affairs had taken. His one wrong step had involved much of this result.

But instead of being able to sever himself entirely from the past he longed more and more to see his mother, to be near the woman he had once called wife. So he took Marie and again set sail for Europe. He had not communicated with his mother since that meeting, so intensely had he dreaded any association that reminded him of that happy past. Then the way she looked at Marie had hurt him. He was very sensitive about that little daughter. But he now resolved upon a visit. Arriving at Paris, he consulted the address his mother had given him and found she occupied a residence in a fash-



ionable quarter. Early one morning he drove to her home and leaving Marie in the carriage entered for an interview alone. She raised her head upon his entrance and surveyed him.

“Mother,” he said huskily.

“Well, what have you been doing?” she inquired coolly.

“I have been trying to redeem the past.”

“I’m glad of that,” returned the old lady rising and offering him her hand. “You are looking much better. By what name are you known at present?”

Coranna winced. “I am known as Signor Adamari.”

“The composer; then you have turned your attention to music again. I’m glad of that, I always knew you had talent. It is better to cultivate anything than the wrong sort of women.”

“For God’s sake, mother, don’t say any more about that. Estelle is dead and Henri also. May Heaven forgive them, as I have tried to do. They both wronged me, I was simply the victim of their mutual disappointment,” and he told her of Henri’s confession.

Mrs. Coranna’s face changed many times during the recital. At its close she embraced him tenderly. “It is such a relief, Charlie — such a relief, to know all. We thought Estelle an innocent girl and that you lured her to ruin. And we never dreamt of your suspecting Lutie. It did not seem possi-



ble that my son could be so wicked, but there were the facts."

"How did Lutie take my departure, mother?" he asked, eagerly.

"It very nearly killed her. She idolized you. She made no fuss whatever. It was impossible at first to get her to take any interest in life. But the rush of travel gradually brought about a reaction. I had fairly to force her into society. But I was determined that she should not be crushed and her young life completely wrecked. I married her to a Prince."

"Ah, yes, I saw him killed. Henri did it. A man I never for a moment distrusted. He completely fooled us all."

"What has become of that little girl?"

"Marie? I left her out in the carriage. Mother, the girl is one of the sweetest creatures that ever lived, and so innocent. She thinks me perfection; you will never let her know anything to my discredit."

"Certainly not, go and bring her to me."

"This lady is a very dear friend of mine, Marie," announced Coranna leading her in.

"She is your mother," returned the little girl looking calmly into her father's eyes. "Don't you remember that day she came to see us?"

"And is not a mother a very dear friend;" returned the old lady embracing her.

"Marie, there is a secret about all this. She is



my mother and your grandmother, but you must never mention the fact. Can papa trust you?"

"Papa, you could trust me with anything."

"I am sure of that. What do you think of her, mother?"

"If she is as good as she is pretty, she will do," answered the old lady kissing her cheek; "can you remain with me for awhile?"

"Yes, I came to visit you. But, mother, where is Lutie?"

"She is here," returned the old lady with a smile.

"Mother, what shall I do? You can't think there is any hope?"

"If I were in your place I would explain all."

"I could never do it. I do not wish to see her again until she knows."

"Stay here, I will send you to your apartments and tell her myself."

Taking Marie, Coranna hastily retired in charge of a servant. Shortly after the princess entered, closely followed by her sons. She was attired in deep mourning. Her beauty seemed to be of a type that positively refused to dim. The color still glowed in her cheeks and the ringlets of bright hair curled softly round her temples. But her expression was listless and her manner had lost all its bright vivacity. Could she recover from this second shock? After greeting her mother-in-law she seated herself, sighing wearily as she drew forth



her embroidery. Carlo handed her a bunch of roses. "Aren't they beautiful, mother? Did you ever see exactly that shade before?"

"No, I can't say that I have. They are very lovely," laying them aside in an absent-minded way. With a look of disappointment, Carlo quietly withdrew to a corner, and began playing softly on his flute.

"Mamma never laughs any more, grandma," grumbled Cino in a whisper. "What can I do to make her laugh?"

"Run off and play, Cino, your mother does not feel like laughing. There is no amusement in laughing unless you are merry."

Thus admonished Cino gave his mother a wistful look and carried the argument over to his brother. Mrs. Coranna crossed over and sat near the Princess. "Lutie, do you ever think of Charlie?"

"Oh, mother, why do you mention him?"

"Because I have lately discovered why he eloped with Estelle."

"Who has told you? why was it? He loved her. And yet I could never see why he married me. He might have married her instead."

"Just so; but he cared nothing for Estelle. He saw you in your brother's arms."

"And thought — and thought —"

"He was a lover. Then he fled with Estelle, being so shocked that he did not clearly realize what



he was doing. Why did you not tell him of your brother, Lutie?"

"I had sworn not to tell. Then he really loved me."

"So much that the idea that you were untrue to him drove him frantic. Leguay sent notes warning him to watch you."

"That horrible man; he wanted me to marry him. But who has told you all this, mother?"

"Do you know Signor Adamari?"

"The composer? Yes; he visited us for awhile and was with us when the Prince died. Did Adamari tell you this?"

"Yes, and he told me also that Charlie had been saved. Lutie, don't look so wild, daughter, Charlie and Adamari are one."

"Oh! mother, mother!" she gasped breathlessly, "he is alive. Carlo, your father is alive! Oh! mother, mother, where is he? Don't keep me in suspense."

"And you forgive him, Lutie?"

"Forgive him! my husband! my darling! Oh, mother, just let me see his face once more, where is he — where is he?"

"Here I am," said Coranna, stepping forward and folding her in his arms in a passionate embrace.

"How is it, are you really my father?" said Carlo, coming forward and laying a trembling hand upon Coranna's arm.



“Lutie, what shall I say to him?” he begged, turning away distressfully.

“Your father and I were separated by the basest treachery on the part of one whom we believed to be a friend, and I thought him dead,” returned Lutie quickly. “This is your father, Carlo; Signor Adamari’s real name is Coranna.”

“It seems too good to be true, doesn’t it, mother, to have such a great composer for one’s father. But you won’t be so glad to have me for a son, I am not so much,” returned Carlo quietly.

Coranna laughed outright. “We certainly shan’t accuse you of vanity. But I will never bear my own name again,” continued Coranna sadly, “you alone will have a right to that. Not a word of all this to your brother, Carlo; nor to any one. I will still continue to be Signor Adamari and we will be married again, if your mother will consent to take that name; will you, Lutie?”

“Yes; that is the only way we can arrange it,” returned Lutie, “what’s in a name as long as we are together, darling, and happy once more. You will trust me in future, will you not?”

“Coranna’s answer was given in kisses. Upon reflection they decided not to take Lutie’s brother into their confidence. A secret had best remain a secret and it would only distress him to know that he had unwittingly caused so much misery. Coranna easily brought about a communication between him and the man for whose supposed death



he was held accountable. When the marriage was about to take place Lutie sent for her uncle, who kept her secrets and visited her occasionally, always an object of terror to the Prince's household.

“Dree times I got to come on a vedding mit dot girl Loodie,” he explained to Van Straat; “vun lawyer runs away; marry a prince; prince gets shot; marry right along vid a composer. Dot girl no stay shnivelling around; dot voman's got sense.”

Coranna sometimes regretted his American home. For grace and culture the society around him was such as he had only dreamed of in youth. But he missed the rush and fervor of the new world. Lutie was uniformly happy, but at times the past bore heavily upon Coranna. His son grieved for the Prince as for a father. Cino proved a wild youth, and it was only the watchful care and patient forbearance of his stepfather that prevented his being entirely ruined. Whenever Coranna was tempted to be tried no further he would remember the prince's treatment of Carlo, and gratitude prevailed where grace might not. As soon as Cino was of age he married Marie, and they were devoted to each other. But Carlo is the idol of both parents. He is not a composer, but the power and pathos of his voice holds thousands enchanted, for the world claims no finer tenor than Coranna.









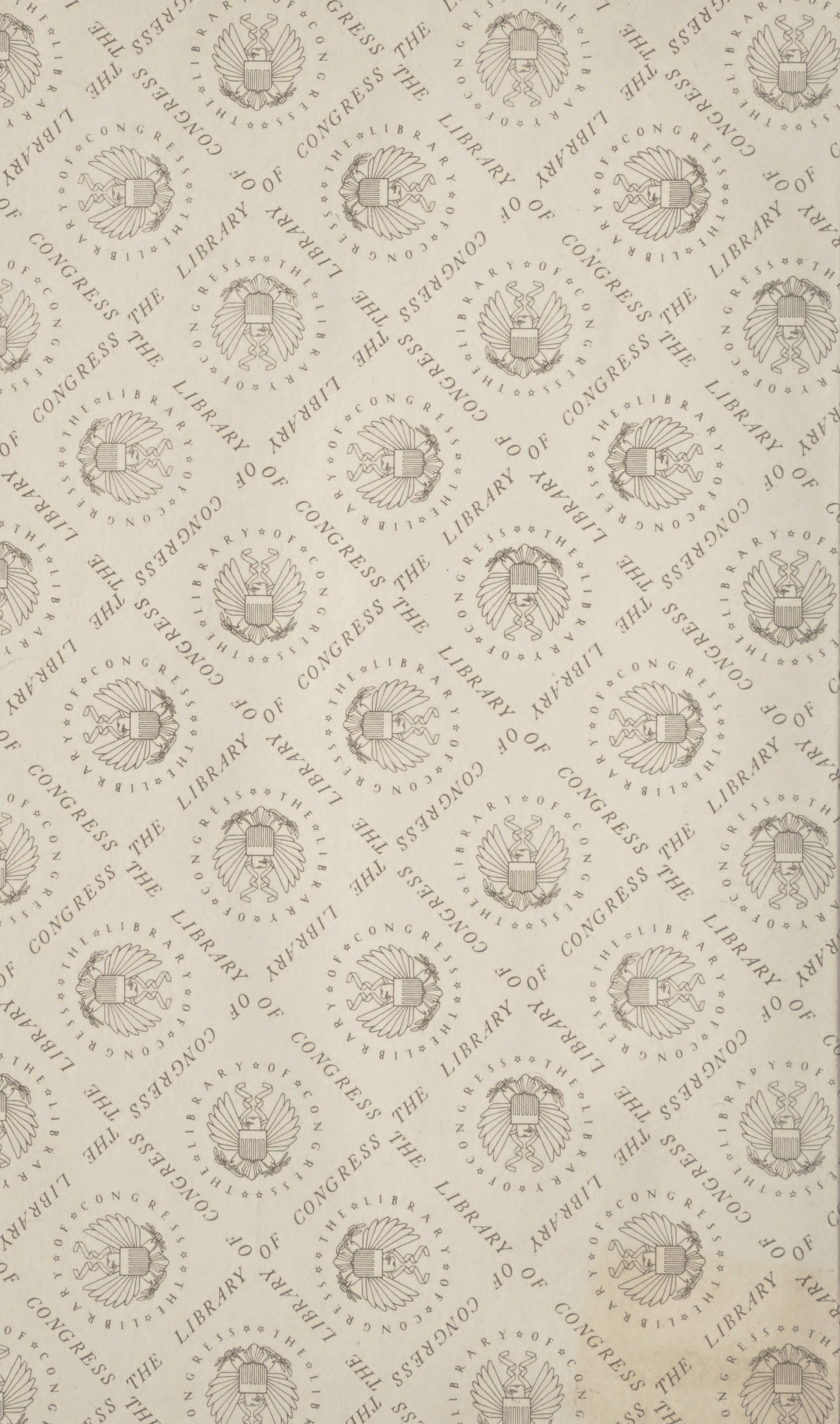


















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